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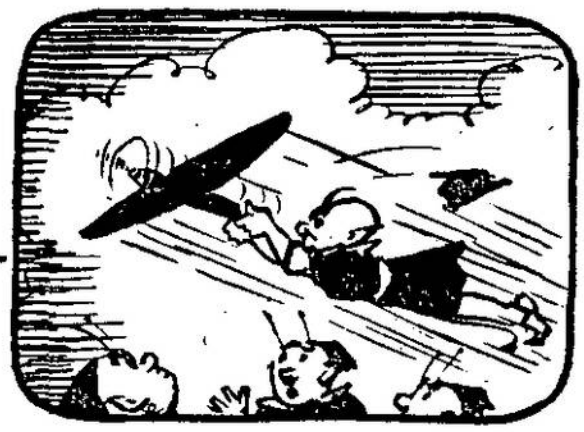

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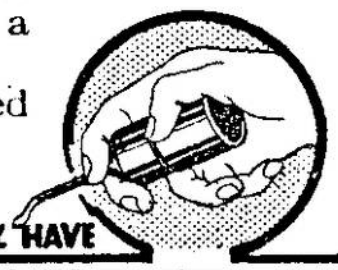

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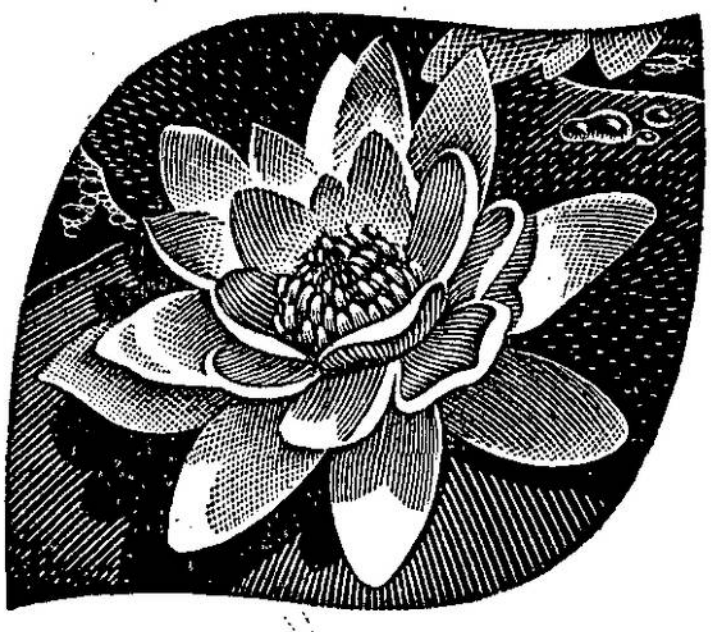

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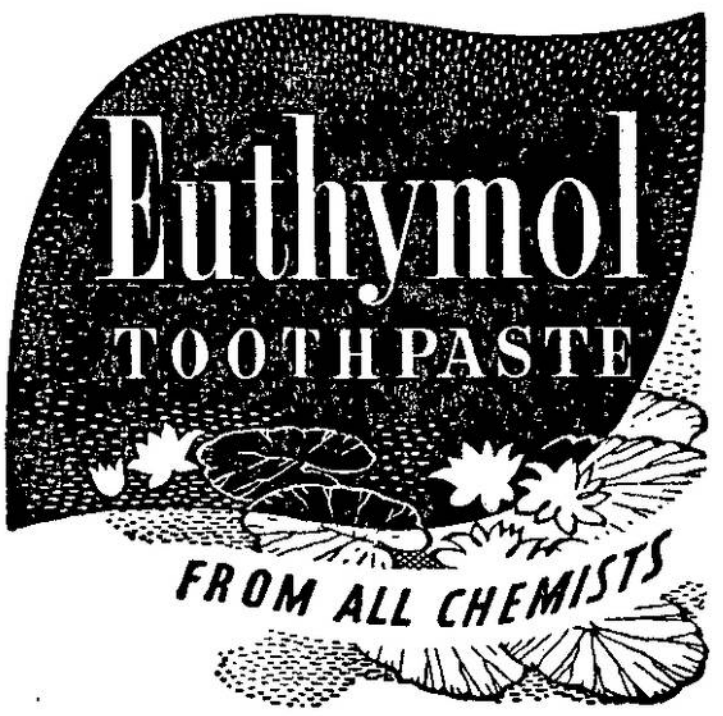

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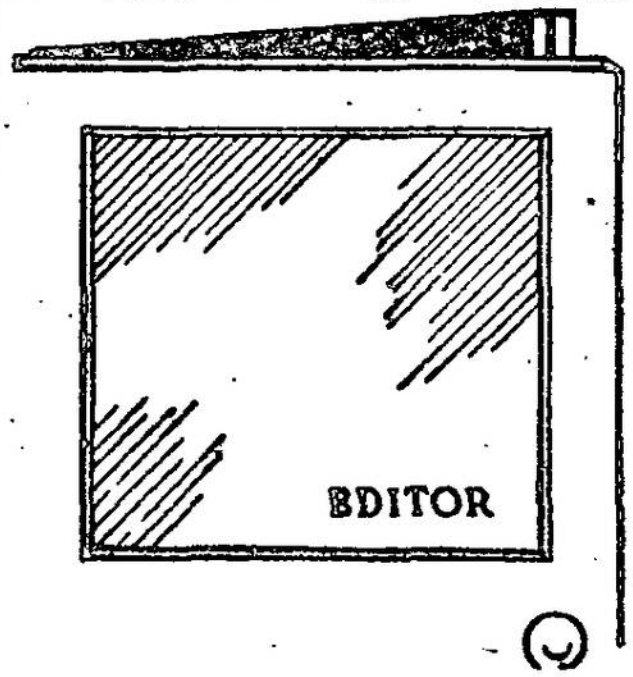

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ARGOSY

Contents for June, 1950

Vol. XI **No. 6**

		Page
High Noon	**John Drinkwater**	**4**
The Threshold	**John Mayo Goss**	**5**
Bush River.	**Joyce Cary**	**13**
Monsieur, the Saint of Virette	**Antonia Ridge**	**21**
The Summer Game		**30**

The stanza by Eric Parker from "The Anthology of Sporting Prose and Verse," by courtesy of Seeley Service and Co.; "Not Quite Cricket!" by permission of Macmillan and Co.; "Eton v. Harrow" by courtesy of John Murray; and "Not Hout!" by permission of Rupert Hart-Davis

Sam Small's Better Half	**Eric Knight**	**33**
All In A Garden Green	**Donald Watt**	**46**
Night Drive	**Will F. Jenkins**	**47**
Lunch, Cricket and Thespia.	**Colin Bullard.**	**57**
Brief Encounters.		**62**
Answer Of The Great Reindeer	**Robert Crottet**	**65**

From "The Enchanted Forest," by permission of The Richards Press

Karmesin and The Unbeliever	**Gerald Kersh**	**81**
Do You Remember?	**Struthers Burt**	**88**
In The Spring	**Guy de Maupassant**	**89**

Translated by Marjorie Laurie, and by permission of T. Werner Laurie

My Kingdom for a Horse		**94**
The Long Chance	**Richard Stern**	**95**
New Line	**W. J. Brown**	**98**

By courtesy of George Allen and Unwin

No Witness	**H. G. Evarts**	**99**
Ring Time.		**110**

"But Yesterday!" by courtesy of Doubleday, Doran & Co.; the poem by John Sampson (Veshtésko Romeriben), from "Romani Poems," by permission of the Gypsy Lore Society; "Wedding in Borneo," by permission of Michael Joseph

Orchid House	**Kathryn Grondahl**	**113**
Dolores	**John Inglis Hall**	**129**
Hornblower, the Duchess and the Devil.	**C. S. Forester**	**139**
Argosy Crossword		**160**

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High Noon

THE chesnut cones were in the lanes,
Blushing, and eyed with ebony,
And young oak-apples lovingly
Clung to their stems; still
As wind may be, among the bloom
Of lilac and the burning broom
The dear wind moved deliciously,
And stayed upon the fragrant hill
And lightened on the sea;
And brushed the nettles nodding through
The budding globes of cloudy may,
And wavelike flowed upon the blue
Flowers of the woods.

It was a day
When pearled blossom of peach and pear
Of blossoming season made an end,
Drifting along the sunlight, rare
Of beauty as thoughts between friend and friend
That have no cunning, but merely know
The way of truth for the heart is so.
It was such a time at the birth of June,
When the day was hushed at the hour of noon,
And whispering leaves gave out a tune
Ghostly as moves the bodiless moon
High in the full-day skies of June.

JOHN DRINKWATER, 1882-1937

THE THRESHOLD

Never had he felt so safe, so confident

by JOHN MAYO GOSS

THE clock on the mantelpiece had not struck—its minute hand had yet a sliver of space to travel before the hour of nine would sound—but Tuck's grandfather always seemed to know the time without benefit of clocks. With a neat thump, he closed the red-bound copy of the *Waverley* novel he had been reading since supper and took off his spectacles. The boy's aunt and uncle disposed of their reading matter, one a book, one a magazine. Tuck pushed the stereoscope and its picture post cards, with which he had been engaged, towards the middle of the table and sat up straight on the piano stool. This was not easy, because it had been raised as high as it would go, and wobbled.

The moment was significant. It was the first time Tuck had been permitted, on a visit to the farm, to stay up for evening prayers. It was the high point of a significant day. That morning, his mother had put him on the bus in the town where they lived, and he had travelled alone the thirty miles to the crossroads near the farm. There his grandfather had met him with the potato surrey and the light team, and as they had driven along the country lane, Tuck had stood between his grandfather's knees and held the reins, for he was seven and a man. It was at seven, in his estimation, that men were made, and it was with overpowering pride that he now saw his aunt reach for the Bible, open it at the place marked by a green ribbon, pinch her glasses a little higher on her nose, and settle back in her rocking chair to read aloud.

Her voice was low but precise, and went on and on until it became part of the room, part of the shadows in the corners, part of the light from the lamp. The shade was a beautiful dark green, and round the copper bowl of the lamp a copper lizard followed a copper fly in everlasting pursuit. The night was sultry and the heat from the lamp oppressive.

That afternoon, Tuck's grandfather had said there was rain in the air, though there had not been a cloud in the sky, and he and Uncle Charles had worked late getting in the last of a field of clover hay. They had come in wet with sweat; Tuck could smell it still

through the straw smell of the matting on the parlour floor and the dust smell of old rugs, old curtains, and old furniture upholstery. He shaded his eyes with a hand, as his uncle was doing. Perhaps men understand more easily with the eyes shaded, he thought.

A change in his aunt's voice aroused him. It took on the emphasis of finality and then stopped. Tuck dropped his hand to see his grandfather standing erect. No one else looked like his grandfather. No one else had such a fine, full, sturdy white beard. No one else had such thick, flowing white hair. When friends of Tuck's aunt, ladies from town, drove out to the farm on Sundays, they would exclaim to her at sight of him, "What a splendid old gentleman!" and "What a noble head!" Tuck went so far in agreeing with these ladies as to wonder what God could look like if not like his grandfather.

The old man stood for a moment in benign authority before he said, "Let us pray." When they had all knelt and the only sound in the room was the clock's tick, he spoke the Lord's Prayer. Tuck was disappointed, for he had hoped for something more dramatic than those familiar words, but he joined in dutifully.

Then his grandfather went on alone, and that was more like it. He besought protection from the dangers and perils of the night in a voice that sounded as if he fully expected a cyclone to whirl the family away or an earthquake to bury it, as if only by calling the Lord's attention to their plight could any of them be saved.

It was impressive. Tuck felt that they had been placed so firmly in the hollow of the Lord's hand that they would all be wafted, wordless, to bed, and when prayers had ended and they were on their feet again, he was surprised to hear his uncle say, in his ordinary tone, "Whew! It's close as a grain bin tonight. I'd better turn the cows out."

His grandfather nodded and said, "Yes, we're going to get that rain. I'm glad we got the hay in." His tone, too, was no more fervent than if he had been asking for a second baked apple at the supper table.

"And now you'd better go to bed, Tuck," said his aunt. "Sure you don't want me to come up with you?" She smiled at the shake of his head and lighted one of the candles standing in their small holders on the hall table and gave it to him.

Always before when Tuck had been at the farm without his mother, he had slept in the dressing room off his aunt's bedroom, and she had always gone upstairs with him soon after supper to see him safe in bed. On this memorable day, she had told him when he arrived to take his suitcase up to the south room, and on this memorable evening he climbed the stairs alone and marched past

all the other bedrooms along the narrow upstairs landing to his own room with a proud consciousness of his maturity. He undressed, got into his pyjamas, blew out the candle, opened the window, and hoisted himself into the big bed in an exalted frame of mind.

It was dark, but Tuck was not afraid. In years long gone—last year and the year before—he would have glanced up at the ceiling before blowing out the candle, to see if the opening into the attic was properly closed. There were no attic stairs at the farm—no one, as far as Tuck knew, had ever been up there—but when the house was built, an oblong hole big enough for a man to squeeze through had been cut in the ceiling of each bedroom.

These apertures had sliding covers, which sometimes, by what supernatural means Tuck could not guess, would be standing open two or three inches. With the cover in this position, the holes in the ceiling had always seemed to Tuck to make an ideal crevice through which hands or paws, feet or claws, or even narrow, elongated heads might emerge.

On this night, though, he gave no thought to such childish fancies. Never had he felt so safe, so confident. The dangers and perils of the night? There were none.

What would he do the next day? Things he had never done: he would climb to the highest beam in the loft of the barn and do a flip-flop to the hay below, as he had seen a twelve year old cousin do; he would do a *double* flip-flop; he would go into Grandfather's workshop and make a boat, and Grandfather would let him use the saw and the lathe, now that he was a man; he would ride Vixen bareback—no, he would ride Vixen's colt Foxcub, whom no one but his uncle had ever been able to ride. He would ride him down into the woods, to the creek, all by himself; he would—he would . . .

Tuck woke to deathly darkness, deathly stillness. His head turned instinctively to the open window. It had no outline. Without and within, the darkness pressed. There was no house in that darkness, no room, no bed, only the darkness to hold him up and press him down. "I have you now," said the darkness. "*Oh, Lord we beseech thee* . . ." thumped his heart.

He was wide awake, lying in rigid premonition, when the shock came and the universe was split with a knife of flame. There was no thunder, no echo, no reverberation. The world leapt into instantaneous white light and was gone again into nothingness.

Then his aunt was standing in his doorway, smiling at him over her lighted candle. "Goodness," she said, "that was a near one, wasn't it? Did it scare you, Tuck?" She looked tall in her dressing gown as she moved across the room. "I'd better close your window. It'll be raining cats and dogs in a minute."

But she did not close the window. She stood for a moment before it, the fingers of her right hand hooked over the sash, her left hand holding the candle away from the curtains. Then, as she bent forward to look out, the candle jumped in her hand. The candle flame was a shred of light clinging to the wick as she ran.

" Charles ! " she cried from the landing. " Charles ! The barn ! The barn's been hit ! It's on fire ! "

The house came alive with movement, with quick questions and answers. Tuck's spine straightened at another lightning flash, but it was not so close. This time, there was thunder, and he was out of bed and at the window before it had stopped growling.

He looked to the left, where the barn would be if there were light enough to see. Nothing. Blackness. Then, there it was—a match flame in the night, high up under the barn's eaves, at the opening where, that afternoon, the big wagons had been unloaded on to the stack within. It was a small flame, but it gave a lurch as Tuck looked, filled the opening, and spread, fast as an outflung hand, higher than the peak of the barn.

Tuck ran downstairs, and in the kitchen his aunt was twirling the handle of the box telephone on the wall, but the wires were dead, and it gave no more tinkle than the handle of a meat mincer. She dropped both hands helplessly, and the receiver she had held banged against the wall. Tuck raced by her and out through the door, and by the time he pulled up inside the farmyard gate, the first thin steeple of flame had reached along the barn roof and the whole end of the building was on fire. Barefooted and still in his pyjamas, he gaped while jets from the blazing hay beneath pierced the dry, age-curled shingles here and there, rose, fell, and rose higher and higher.

The rain held off ; there was no wind ; the sparks flickered up and died in the dark or were absorbed in the intermittent lightning. The great old bell on top of the house started to ring, but not in the measured tones with which it announced dinnertime to the fields ; now its clapper stuttered in an hysterical call for help. His aunt again, Tuck knew.

He heard his uncle's voice, tight with urgency, from within the barn, " Pull up now, Curly. Get around there, Doll." All the stock except the two harness teams had been turned out to the pasture, and the four horses appeared, singly, at the main door of the stalls. They each hung back, breathed gustily, and then stumbled out at a slap on their rumps and ran down the pasture lane in their clumsy, cart-horse canter.

The farmyard was as bright as day. The shadows of the crib and sheds and trees shifted and swung. Now and then, a lightning flash wiped them out, but they reappeared in their places again. The

bell beat through the thunder. Smoke bulged from the barn door.

Tuck's grandfather pushed out through the smoke, bowed down under the horses' harness. Then his uncle appeared, and he, too, was all hung about with bridles and pads and breeching and traces. Both men wore their nightshirts thrust into their trousers, and both, like Tuck, were barefoot. Uncle Charles dropped his load just outside the door, pulled his white-sleeved arm hard down over his eyes and face, and ran back through the doorway. Grandfather dragged the tackle farther from the barn, and Uncle Charles staggered out with another load. In and out he went, bringing more harness, then saddles and blankets, bushel baskets, piles of sacks and tarpaulins, and the heavy logging tools—axes and chains, the maul, the wedges, and the two-man saw.

Now the roof was one great flame. The lightning fell into it and was gone; the thunder was part of its eager, omnivorous roar. The boy was held motionless in its glare, though his face burned with it. Then his aunt stood beside him, and he realized that the bell had stopped ringing. She was carrying two buckets of water, but she went no farther. With her eyes on the fire, she lowered the pails to the ground and stood erect between them, watching.

Tuck watched his uncle materialize, empty-handed, in the smoke of the doorway and felt his aunt start forward as his uncle swayed and held himself upright against the doorpost. But in an instant Tuck's grandfather was at his side and he put an arm round his back and helped him across the yard. Tuck's aunt turned and ran for the house.

As the two men passed Tuck, his grandfather swept him up with his free arm and set him down again just outside the farmyard gate. There they turned, the three of them, to face the fire once more. Tuck's uncle crossed his arms on top of the gate and laid his forehead on them as his shoulders rose and fell with tearing breaths. He did not raise his head when one section of the roof went in, though it made a whoof like a man hit in the stomach, and the sparks filled the sky.

The maple tree beside them stirred, and they could feel a wind at their backs. The crest of the great flame bowed away, straightened, and bent again more deeply as the wind came in a gust. On the gust was rain—big drops. Tuck looked up at his grandfather, who shook his head, turned about, and lifted his face while the drops beat upon him, faster and faster. The rain gathered into a downpour, and they started for the house.

When they reached the kitchen, they were as wet as they could be. Tuck's aunt was feeding coke into the range as they entered, and did not look up. His uncle crossed to the east window, through which the fire, glowing red in the rain, made a stronger light than

the lamp on the wall, and pulled down the shade. He sat down slowly in a straight chair. His eyes were red-rimmed and bloodshot; his face and nightshirt were streaked; one sleeve was ripped to the shoulder. He filled and emptied his chest again and again with clean air, then his head fell loosely forward and his hands fell limply. At the gesture, nervous tears forced themselves into Tuck's eyes.

A car racketed up beside the house. A man yelled "Wow!" and a woman cried, "Ain't that awful, Gus, ain't that awful!"

"That will be the Crumpaughs," said Tuck's grandfather quite steadily, "the first of our neighbours."

The boy was crying now and, ashamed of his tears, he fled from the kitchen to his room.

When Tuck woke the next morning, he lay for a moment in the continued contemplation of the hero-sized deeds he had been planning when first he had gone to sleep the night before—somersaults to be turned from great heights, clipper ships to be built and rigged, fiery steeds to be ridden far distances. Then the lightning flash and the burning of the barn came back to him, and he swung from the bed to the window.

He knew that it had not been a dream. He knew that he would not see the barn as it had always been, looming protectively over the smaller buildings about it, over the corncrib and the workshop, the pigsties and the chicken house, the calf shed and the wagon shed, yet he was not prepared for the reality. It did not seem that the fire's magnificence in the night could leave anything so stark for the daylight.

He stood naked before the window, for when he had gone back to bed, he had wriggled out of his rain-soaked pyjamas, and now he shivered in the morning air as he looked out upon the ugly, jagged black oblong, as low as a fence, that was all that was left of the barn.

From within the enclosure, a few charred timbers projected, mis-shapen, as if in pain, and a vague column of whitish, steamy smoke ascended thinly. The smell of the smoke and wet wood ash and wet hay ash—the smell came through the window, the smell of disaster.

Tuck dressed, with no pride in his new overalls and knee-high rubber boots, went downstairs, and slipped out of the side door, for he could hear his aunt in the kitchen and he had no wish to talk to her. He still did not feel too sure of himself. He might suddenly begin to cry again. But at the yard gate he stopped, half ready to return to the house and to any companionship he might find.

The farmyard was deserted, and there were none of the usual sounds of the farm getting up. The lesser buildings looked aban-

doned and dilapidated, as if they were already falling hopelessly apart now that their chief member had been taken from them. Tuck saw no sign of his grandfather, who should have been milking somewhere or in the corncrib getting fodder for the cows. And he missed hearing his uncle talking to the horses as he curried and harnessed them, shouting, "What're you doing there?" and "Back up now," as if he were out of all patience with them, though he loved the horses and his care of them was well known.

Then Tuck saw his uncle coming up the lane, dangling an empty bushel basket by one handle, and knew he had been down to the pasture with corn. He must be very tired, Tuck thought.

He tossed the basket towards the door of the crib and, without looking to right or left, went directly to the pile of equipment that had been salvaged from the fire. He regarded the tangled, muddy mess before him with bent head and hanging arms. Then he raised a saddle with the toe of his boot from the puddle in which it lay, and let it drop with a splash.

When Tuck's uncle turned and noticed the intentness with which he was being watched, he straightened, walked over to him, and said, "Come along, young fella. We'll be late for morning prayers," and he laughed as if he had made a joke. Tuck had taken two quick steps at his side before he realized what had been said.

He would have stopped in his tracks if it hadn't been for the urging hand of his uncle on his shoulder, for he recalled the prayers of the night before, when his grandfather had so trustingly given the farm and all that was in it into the safe keeping of the Almighty.

On the back porch, Tuck pulled off his prized new boots and slammed them down so hard that the cat by the kitchen door was stung by the spattered mud and took refuge behind a basket of logs. Once again, he looked at the desolation across the farmyard fence as he turned to follow his uncle into the house.

Prayers again. For what? But there was no escaping the ritual. As he walked behind his uncle, both of them padding across the kitchen in their stocking feet—two men together—his aunt abandoned her stove and fell in behind him, making a little procession.

His grandfather was in the parlour before them, standing by the centre table, turning the deer-foot-handled paper knife over and over. His hair and beard were beautifully brushed and he wore a clean white shirt, though it was only Thursday. He looked at them, one after the other, and then his eyes rested on the face of Tuck's uncle. After a long moment, he said, "Charles, remember that yesterday there was no house here and no trees but the little butternut by the hedge. There was only empty prairie." Slowly, he took them all in again with his eyes; then he said, "Let us pray."

Tuck knelt with the rest, but only after he had stomped

independently across the room to the curved seat by the bow window, and he did not put his hands before his face or close his eyes, nor did he join in the Lord's Prayer when his grandfather commenced.

Grief and anger kept his lips tight shut and his eyes smarting. Resolutely, he paid no attention as his grandfather prayed. He looked out of the window at the slope of the front garden dropping away to the white board fence along the road, winking to clear the tears from his eyes.

There were trees in the front garden—sweeping soft maples shading the house and the lawn, stately trees, well cared for and lusty in their prime—and his head went slowly round until he could see, out of the corner of his eye the butternut tree, off by itself beside the hedge. It was lopsided, for one of its limbs had been ripped off in a wind, and some of its upper branches were dead; it was bent and it was old. *Empty prairie*, he thought.

"*Grant us patience under our afflictions.*" Tuck's grandfather's voice had not been raised, but it had taken on such resonance that the boy could no longer help distinguishing the words. "*Give us grace to be just and upright in all our dealings; quiet and peaceable; full of compassion; and ready to do good to all men . . .*"

Colin, the collie dog, who always hid himself under the back porch in a storm, came swinging loosely round the corner of the house, stopped squarely under the bow window, looked up at Tuck, and wagged his tail, inviting him out. And suddenly Tuck became aware of odours that he had not even noticed as he had crossed the kitchen. He smelled coffee and bacon and pancakes.

". . . *These things, and whatever else thou shalt see to be necessary and convenient to us, we humbly beg . . .*"

Across the lane, the south cornfield was a rich blue green in the early sunlight, and beyond it the woods were a soft grey green. The sky was bluer than Tuck had ever seen it.

"*Amen,*" he heard his grandfather and his aunt and his uncle all say together, and his uncle's voice was as strong and clear as the others. He heard them getting to their feet. His eyes flicked round again to the butternut tree, and, quickly, he whispered his own "*Amen.*"

* * *

ALL THE WAY

"Ye gods!" exclaimed an observer, taking his first peep through the Palomar telescope.

The professor in charge swung round sharply. "Yes! Pretty good telescope, isn't it?" he commented, drily.

Californian Columnist

☆*Soldier, poet, novelist, Joyce Cary was born some sixty years ago in Londonderry. During the First Great War he went east to serve with a Nigerian regiment, and later he became magistrate and executive officer in a remote district of tropical Africa. But his health had suffered from the war and he had to retire home. Then, at the age of forty, he began to write.*

"Bush River," a tense little story that derives almost certainly from firsthand experience, is a fine example of the author's powerful style, his rare understanding, and of his gift for creating characters that spring instantly alive.

BUSH RIVER

by JOYCE CARY

A BLACK pony, tied by one leg to the stump of a tree, was eating corn from a wooden bowl. A little brown soldier groomed it furiously, prancing round it in poses of dramatic violence and twisting his face, like his body, every moment into some unexpected form. Sweat poured down his cheeks and bare chest, on which an identity disc and a leather amulet, on separate cords, performed a kind of African minuet. At every few strokes he fell back a yard, passing his quivering hand, as small and nervous as a child's, upwards over his whole face, and cried loudly in Hausa, "Oh—beautiful—oh, the lovely one. Oh, God bless him. See how he shines."

A young officer with an eyeglass in his right eye walked slowly round pony and groom. Now and then he glanced severely upon both. Everything about him, his clipped hair, which left him almost bald, his clipped moustache, even his eyeglass, increased this air of severity, of an austere and critical aloofness.

"Now then, Mamadu," he said, "get on with it. What about the tail?"

"Oh, what a tail. Did you ever see such a tail?"

"I never saw such a dirty one."

The little soldier pulled his face into a long, dolorous oval and sent his eyebrows to the top of his skull. But the officer did not notice this performance. He had walked down to the river bank.

The river was an African river never yet banked up, tamed, dredged, canalized; a river still wild. It poured along in tan

coloured flood carrying with it whole trees, and every part of its surface showed a different agitation. Here it was all in foaming breakers, suddenly cut off by a spear-shaped eddy like pulled brown silk; beyond the eddy was a dark sea, with crisp waves jumping, like a wind flaw; and, over on the far side, long manilla ropes of water seemed to turn upon themselves as they whirled under the banks.

This savage river not only moved with agile power, it worked. One saw it at work, digging out its own bed, eating at its banks. Every moment some piece of bluff crumbled; stones, bushes, fell and vanished.

The young officer, like most people, found a certain attraction in all rivers and moving waters. But African rivers fascinated him. Looking at them he understood that old phrase, "the devouring element." He asked himself how Africa survived against such destruction. At the same time, he thought, how magnificent was the gesture with which Africa abandoned herself to be torn, like a lioness who stretches herself in the sun while her cubs bite at her.

A thin old sergeant, with extremely bandy legs, marched up, gave a sketchy wartime salute, and said in a grumbling voice, "Captain Corner, sir."

"Yes, Sergeant?"

"Germans, sir. They come."

Young Corner withdrew his eyes slowly from the fascinating river and looked once more at the pony, which had taken its nose from the bowl to nibble at the orderly's legs. He said severely, "Don't forget the tail, Mamadu."

And once more he walked slowly round, frowning through his eyeglass at the pony. It was a Barbary stallion, jet black except beneath the belly, which showed a tinge of bronze. It had legs which looked too fine for its body, a crest like the Parthenon chargers and a forelock swinging to its nose. The little head, with full round eyes and tilted nostrils, was like a stag's. The ears were small and pointed, curled like the husks of an almond.

Corner had never before owned a pony of such quality. He had brought it with him, against all advice, on this secret journey through enemy country, because he would not agree to leave it behind, in some horse-line, to be neglected or starved by strangers. He had said, "There won't be any mares about—the villages are empty." But already twice Satan had imagined mares and sent out a trumpet as good as a bugle call for every German within a mile.

Each of these tremendous neighs had scattered the men diving for cover and startled the young officer out of himself. Each time, in the awful silence which followed, he had sat waiting for a shot,

and thinking with amazement: "My God, what a damned fool I was to bring this blasted pony. What a hell-fired ass I am."

And the amazement was even stronger than the anger. It was as though he had discovered for the first time his own folly, his own mysterious power to forget, simply to abolish commonsense, and walk gravely, with the most reasonable and dignified air, into impossible situations.

The men creeping back from the scrub would look sulkily at the animal still walking on his toes with ears cocked and nostrils flared. They hated Satan for these alarums. And that was why the young man now said to the sergeant, "After all the row you've been making down there." He was defending his darling. He was saying, "You complain of my pony, but what about your chatter." And even while he said it he was ashamed of himself; he was amazed at his own small-mindedness. "Not like that, Mamadu—don't tear at it." He took the comb out of the man's hands.

"Captain, sir. Captain Corner, sir." The sergeant made another wartime salute, and cried in a voice unexpectedly shrill, "We see 'em, sir."

Corner, understanding these words at last, looked with surprise at the sergeant and said, "Who's seen who, Sergeant?"

"Germans, sir. We see 'em, over the river. And the river too big. He too big."

"That's the style," Corner murmured to the orderly. He took the excuse of stroking the pony's croup, as if to test the grooming. He did not like to show too openly his passion before Mamadu in case of provoking the latter's admiring outcries, which, for some reason, got on his nerves. His severe air was in fact a defence against this noisy and exaggerated praise.

"Gently does it," he said, and Mamadu cried, "Oh, what hair—what a tail. God save us, it touches the ground."

Corner carefully unravelled the tail. Satan, having ground up every bit of corn in the bowl, turned his delicate nose and began to eat the tree stump. His tail switched in the young man's hand, and he glanced sideways at his master. The large black eyes, more brilliant under the thick, short lashes than any woman's, expressed something which always gave Corner acute pleasure; though he could scarcely have described it, except by the words, "The little brute doesn't give a damn for me or anybody else."

He frowned and said, "Eating still—this horse would eat anything."

The sergeant turned and walked off, humping his right shoulder in a peculiar manner.

"Oh, a lovely eater—it's a marvel how he eats. Why, he'll eat a desert round himself wherever he is."

The orderly quite understood that Corner's critical look was simply the outward manner of his obsession; a lover's constraint. He seemed too easily to penetrate his master's mind. And Corner slightly resented it.

He said illogically, "Then why don't you groom him properly. Look at that mane—look at the dust in the roots."

"But, sir, it's too thick—just look how thick. Holy God, a wonder for thickness."

The sergeant reappeared under the huge trees which surrounded the little mud flat. His shoulder was almost at his ear and he had also begun to limp. He said flatly, "We no cross here, sir—he too bad place."

"But we have to cross here, it's the only good place for the gun."

The duty of the party was to discover if it were practicable to drag a French seventy-five a hundred miles through the unmapped bush to a certain rendezvous. The idea was to surprise the Germans with this gun, which ranked, in Africa, as heavy artillery.

"The men, they say they no fit to cross."

"Why?" Corner was startled. He looked thoughtfully at the sergeant. "There's nobody there; you're not afraid of demons, are you?"

Sergeant Umaru had, in fact, a great terror of demons, especially in strange bush, and his fear sometimes infected his men. But the men, whether of the river, the Germans or demons, were already frightened. Corner found them huddled in a group on the bank, staring through the scrub across the roaring stream. Their faces had the look of panic, a loosened appearance as if the flesh had turned soft and sagged a little from the bone. Mouths were hanging slack; one young soldier was showing his lower teeth.

"What's the trouble?" Corner was saying. "There are no Germans within miles. And this river is too fast for crocodiles or water spirits."

He was fond of his men and knew them well, brave and cool in action, but subject to unexpected and mysterious panics.

"It's a bad place," a lance-corporal muttered, rolling his eyes about like a child in a cellar.

"Nonsense, it's a very good place. Mamadu, saddle up. Where are the swimmers for the loads?"

On the evening before, there had been eight volunteers eager to take charge of the loads: rifles, ammunition and rations floated on gourds; but now there was none. Corner looked round him with an air of surprise, which was purely formal. His mind was scarcely interested in this crisis. He was preoccupied with the

river. "A very good place," he murmured. "Where's the guide for the ford?"

"No guide, sir—he no come."

"No guide." He was startled. And then at once he felt a peculiar sense of anticipation. Not of pleasure, scarcely of excitement. It was as if an opportunity had opened itself before the young man; a gate in the wall of his routine, through which his mind already began to flow. Or rather the force which poured eagerly through this gap was not his at all but that peculiar energy which had possessed him for days; the energy of his passion for Satan, for the wild bush, especially for the wild river.

The different streams rushed together at the same gap, and their joined forces were overwhelming. They swept away the whole bank, the whole wall. Young Corner looked severely upon his men and said in a voice of resignation, "I suppose you want me to give you a lead. Bring Satan, Mamadu."

Satan was brought. He stretched out his shining neck and nibbled the tassel on the sergeant's fez. But no one laughed. The men were quite dissolved in panic. While Corner mounted, they gazed at him with round eyes which seemed to be liquefying with fear.

The little sergeant alone had his surly veteran's composure. He hitched up his whole right arm and muttered, "Very bad river, sir. Them crocodiles live, sir. Them Germans live other side. I see 'em."

But Corner did not even listen to him. He had been carried far away from any notion of Germans, or crocodiles. He had no mind for anything but the river and Satan beneath him, who, by means of the magnificent river, was going to achieve a triumph.

He held out each leg in turn for Mamadu to pull off his boots. Bare legged, he hooked his big toes through the sides of the stirrup irons, gave his eyeglass an additional screw, and jammed on his hat—a disreputable Terai. Then, for the first time, he examined the river, not as a fascinating object but as an obstacle. He measured the weight of the current and the direction of the eddies.

He had swum horses before, but only for a few yards, once on a road after a storm, once in a river pool; never in flood water.

It was not a thing one set out to do. On an ordinary journey, the grooms took horses across unbridged rivers from a boat, holding them short by head ropes to keep their noses up. A man who chose to swim his own horse, when a boat or a ford was available, would have seemed quite mad; and if he managed to drown himself or his horse, he would seem also irresponsible.

Corner, at twenty six, was an extremely conventional young

officer, a little bit of a dandy, a good deal of a coxcomb. He had a strong prejudice against the unusual. It seemed to him affected, and he hated affectation. What gave him a calm personal delight in this opportunity, seized upon so eagerly by the forces which possessed him, was the knowledge that he *had* to swim this river. He had a first-class excuse for doing what he had often wanted to do. He told himself that he was not his own master, not in any sense of the word.

Satan stepped into the water, moving as usual with the precise muscular liveliness of a dancer, and obeying signals that his rider had not consciously given; the faint shade of a leg pressure, the beginning of a wrist turn.

A corporal called out suddenly, "Don't go there, sir—we find them ford, sir."

Satan's breast was already under water. He lifted his head; he was swimming within five yards of the bank.

Corner, up to the neck, as Satan's hindquarters sank beneath him, took his feet out of the stirrups, hooked his right hand into the pommel of the saddle and floated over it. He found at once that he had no control over the pony. He could only talk to him in Hausa. "Keep at it, friend—straight ahead."

When he spoke, he felt an affection for the little horse, an exultant pride in his courage, so different in quality from anything that he had known before that it could not be described. It was more than sympathy, more than the bantering love of a friend; it was a feeling so strong that it seemed to have its own life, full of delight and worship; laughing at Satan and rejoicing in all devotion and courage; the mysterious greatness of the spirit.

He wanted to laugh, to call out, like Mamadu. But again, as if constrained by decorum, or a sense of what was proper to his responsibilities, he merely looked severe and repeated in an admonitory tone, "Keep it up, old boy—that's the stuff."

They were now in mid-current. At this level, the river seemed a mile wide and the waves a little ocean storm. The far bank was a mere line on the horizon. A tree trunk, turning its branches like an enormous screw, went swinging past, three yards from Satan's nose. Satan turned an ear back as if expecting some remark; but his nose never deviated an inch from the line. It pointed like a compass at the opposite bank, now passing at a speed which seemed like a train's.

Once only he showed some emotion, when a wave splashed into his nose. He then gave a snort; not the short, loud snort of indignation or surprise, but the longer exhalation which means enquiry and suspended judgment. The bank was now close, and it proved to be extremely high and steep. What's more, the eddy

under the bank was like a mill-stream. Satan seemed to be deeper in the water. Another wave struck him in the nose and he snorted loud and sharp. Corner thought, " If he turns back, we're done."

But Satan obviously had no notion of turning back. Possibly he was too stupid to think of it; or perhaps wise enough to know its danger. Perhaps it was not in the habit of his mind and breeding to turn back.

He struck with his forefeet at the clay, now flying past at the rate of four miles an hour. But it was as hard as brick above water level, and his unshod hooves brought down only small shoots of dust. Corner murmured, " That's it, old boy, go at it."

But he did not see exactly what was to be gone at. They whirled along the bank, and Satan, continuing to stab at it furiously, sank suddenly over his nose and, coming up again with a terrific snort, again stabbed and again sank.

They were carried round a point and struck a snag, itself caught against a stump. The cliff behind was breached by some recent avalanche which was heaped among the roots of the stump. Corner threw himself on the snag and backed up the slope, hauling on the reins. Satan made a powerful effort and heaved himself out of the river. In a moment both were on the level ground ten feet above the water level, among short bushes.

Corner felt as if he, too, had swum a river. He was tired as only a swimmer can be. He chose a patch of young grass and lay flat on his back, holding Satan by the loose rein.

Suddenly he heard a click and turned his head towards it. Over a bush, not ten yards away, he saw the outline of a head, in a soldier's cap, and a rifle barrel.

" The Germans," he thought, or rather the realization exploded inside his brain like a bomb on a time fuse, illuminating a whole landscape of the mind—that is to say, in the foreground. He was stupefied again by the spectacle of his own enormous folly; but also by something incomprehensible behind it and about it. And it was with a kind of despair that he said to himself, " You've done it at last, you fool. You asked for it. But why, why—? "

He hadn't even a revolver, so he lay quite still. Fatalistic, but not resigned. For he was resentful. He detested this monster o his own stupidity.

At the same time he was in great terror—the calm, helpless terror of the condemned. He was holding his breath for the shot. He had a queer sensation, so vivid that he still remembered it twenty years after, of floating lightly off the ground.

Nothing happened. There was a deep silence. And then suddenly a cold touch on his bare calf made him shiver. But he

perceived at once that it was Satan's nose. The pony wanted a tuft of fresh grass just under his leg.

The young man jumped up, and looked angrily at the bushes. But no German fired.

"Captain." The sergeant's voice behind was full of exultation. Dripping, he saluted almost well enough for a recruit on parade.

"Oh, you've got over at last." Corner turned upon the man.

"All present, sir," and he saluted again. "We find them ford—dem guide come."

"I suppose he was there all the time. We stop here. We'll have to work on this bank. Put out two pickets at once. And tell the men to keep on the alert."

The men, shouting and laughing in triumph as they climbed the bank, were annoyed to be put on picket. They were quite sure that there were no Germans within miles. As the sergeant said in Hausa, "If the Germans were here, they would have fired before this."

Corner, with a brisk, efficient air, marched up and down, inspected the pickets, pegged out a section of bank to be cut away. He could hear the orderly's voice raised in a song of praise loud enough to reach his ear, and intended to do so.

"Oh, the marvellous swimmer. Oh, the brave horse. Oh, princely horse—the worthy son of kings among horses. Look at him, my brothers. How nobly he moves his lovely ears. Oh, wise horse; he's as wise as a clerk. God bless him in his bravery—in his beauty. Oh, God bless him in his eating."

Corner frowned and walked farther away, as if from contagion. He turned his eyes and thoughts from Satan. He would not even look at the river. But all the more they were present to his feeling—the feeling of one appointed by chance to a special good fortune, to gratitude, to the accidents of fate.

* * *

LOGIC

Two buzzards were lazily winging over the Arizona desert when a jet-propelled plane suddenly went hurtling by, its exhausts belching flame and smoke. The buzzards silently watched it disappear into the Western sky, and then one of them found his voice. "Lordy, lordy!" he said. "Was that bird in a hurry!"

"Listen, Lucius," opined the other, "you'd be in a hurry too if your tail was on fire."

Told by BENNETT CERF

★*In France good saints are not set on pedestals and respectfully forgotten! Author Antonia Ridge has spent many years in Normandy and Provence, where she learned the delightful and amusing legends about these country and often unofficial saints who have become tokens of affection and regard to the paysans.*

Miss Ridge says: "When I sit down, pen in hand, to consider how on earth I can imprison in English the warm, easy familiarity of the Continental towards his saints, I seem to be back on the terrace of the café-restaurant of my Uncle Jules. Slippers on feet, straw hat on the back of his head, a glass of sparkling wine in his hand, he sits under the stars and recounts his stories."

MONSIEUR, THE SAINT OF VIRETTE

by ANTONIA RIDGE

IT was very late and very hot, and my Uncle Jules and old Gassin from the Bank and Monsieur Padde were still out taking their ease on the terrace of the *Hotel de l'Europe*, the high sounding name of my uncle's modest café-restaurant in a back street of Marseilles.

We had just finished a complicated and most contentious game of "belotte", and my Uncle Jules was pouring out another little glass all round.

"Yes, I assure you," he was saying, with all the authority of one who once spent a month in London, "it is altogether impossible for these English to understand how we feel about our saints. Over there, their relations even with Saint George and his dragon are of the very coldest formality—a correctly patriotic radio programme on the twenty-third of April perhaps, but that is about all. No pious pilgrimages in packed excursion trains, no parading a jolly dragon round the streets, no fair to wind up the day, no rejoicing, no cordiality whatever.

"Over here now, we regard the saints as one of the family . . ."

"Certainly we do," put in Monsieur Padde. "And we expect them to behave as such too. In the village where I was born for instance we always relied on good Saint Taurin for our quota of rain. After all, *le bon Dieu* can't see to everything. And if we found it necessary to jog our little saint's memory, we took his statue out

of the church and carried him round the countryside so that he could see for himself how the drought was playing the devil with our crops. Then we took him for a picnic on the mountainside. Yes, there he would stand, beaming at us all, enjoying the fresh air, and we would all sit about him on the grass and drink to his celestial health. And believe it or not, many a time before the day was out, we would have to pick him up and rush him back to church before his colours ran in a sudden downpour of the rain he would suddenly remember he had forgotten to send us."

"But what if it didn't rain?" I asked.

"*Extremis malis, extrema remedia*," quoted Monsieur Padde with utmost gravity. "If there was no rain by the evening we took our saint to the river and gently lowered him down in the water three times, to refresh his memory, and this time never mind if his colours ran. But no hard feelings on either side, mind you. Then as soon as the rain came, we'd give him a new coat of paint and simply smother him in flowers and candles. Oh yes, we were all very fond of our saint even if he was so absent minded."

"*Tron de l'air!*" scoffed my uncle. "You call that absent minded, an occasional *laisser-aller* like that? It is clear that you have never heard of the Curé of Virette."

"But this doesn't really astonish me," he went on, very gratified to see us all looking at him in hushed expectancy, "for Virette is a very small village lost up there in the foothills of the Cevennes. I happen to know about it because my great-grandmother on my mother's side was born in those parts. In fact we still have some cousins up there."

Now in the days of my great-grandmother they had a Curé in Virette by the name of Auguste Mathieu Tavat, a saintly man, with a smile like a little child and a heart as generous and pure as an angel. He was not however one of your brisk efficient parish priests who remember to wind their clocks and keep a careful eye on their lists of appointments with the living and the dead. No, no, if monsieur le Curé de Virette by any chance came across the key of his clock and if he also remembered to wind it up, then he would most certainly forget to look at it. And if he made a conscientious note of some future engagement, then he would put his little paper away so carefully that he would only come across it when he was searching for something quite different, and by that time of course it would be weeks or months or even years too late to do anything about it.

But the good people of Virette were used to their Curé. Indeed they were quite proud of him for it isn't every village that can tell so many good stories about their priest. There was, for example, that marriage between a most determined young woman called

Alarde and a rollicking roll-by-night of a pedlar called Marius Viens-Ici. This wedding was not a month too soon—for Alarde anyway! But the tardy groom knew this meant adieu to his fine careless youth, adieu to spending as fast as it came, adieu for ever to love snatched among the thyme and lavender high on the mountain with the stars dancing merrily overhead. He was snared.

From then on till death did them part, the stalwart determined Alarde would trudge the mountain roads beside him and there would be no shaking her off. Besides there would be this infant—so indisputably his.

And such was the gloom on Marius' sunburnt face, the sag of his proud back, that monsieur le Curé gave him one startled look and decided that he must have mistaken the nature of the rally. He sought, vainly of course, for his spectacles, and holding his book close to his eyes, agitatedly turned the pages. He was just about to intone a sympathetic *De Profundis* when in the very nick of time, an intelligent little acolyte plucked him by the sleeve and whispered, "No, no, monsieur le Curé, you have to marry mademoiselle, not bury her!"

Oh yes, it was quite moving the way the choirboys, the Children of Mary, the little ones of the Catechism, in fact every child of the village of Virette took an affectionate pride in being of service to monsieur le Curé. They spent many a happy hour hunting for his spectacles, his holy-water brush, his goat, his handkerchief, the registers of marriages, births and deaths, and all the other movable property, personal and ecclesiastical, that monsieur le Curé would put down for a moment and then forget just where.

It was all quite simple to their simple minds. Monsieur le Curé could hardly be expected to have a head for all this. How could he? His saintly head was forever lost in the shining clouds of Heaven.

Not that this made little angels of them all. On the contrary it gave them the most magnificent opportunities that they eagerly grasped with both hands. If young Polyte, for instance, had the luck to spot monsieur le Curé's spectacles on the sundial in his little garden, he would wait till they were all about to sing Vespers.

Monsieur le Curé would begin; "*Deus in adjutorium meum intende*," and put a questing hand to his forehead. Then he would turn in mute appeal and up would shoot Polyte waving a significant arm. Monsieur le Curé would nod and out would swagger Polyte to return as late as possible and at a most pertinent moment such as "*Laudate Dóminum, omnes gentes*," panting most artistically and holding out the spectacles. Whereupon some guileless old lady would be sure to murmur, "*Ah, le brave petit!*" and slip him her bag of peppermints. And Polyte would very loudly and devoutly chant what was left of Vespers with an air of angelic triumph

calculated to inflame the envy and fury of the rest of the Catechism Class, packed tightly together on the two front benches.

Then there was the organ—an ancient, battered instrument standing to one side of the pulpit. If monsieur le Curé had a failing, an innocent *péché mignon*, it was his passion for playing this little organ. And the music he made flowed like the waters of Lethe carrying with them all his excellent resolutions to water his garden, to speak very sternly to that gay young baggage, the widow Honorine, and to spend an hour in ear-splitting conversation with old Lassagne who was deaf in both ears and touchy about it.

As he grew older, monsieur le Curé began to make more and more excuses for spending more and more time in his little church, playing away as if he were the Maestro César Franck himself performing on the great electric organ of Saint Augustin in Paris.

But alas, he was not César Franck and the little organ was not electric—the choirboys took it in turn to pump the air into its complaining, asthmatic lungs. And probably the sunshine would be pouring in through the open door, and by and by even the most conscientious and music loving of choirboys would sneak out.

Presently not a sound, not a ghost of a note would come from the organ. But monsieur le Curé would not notice. He would play on and on, and the fine celestial music he heard so clearly, though not with his ears, would rise and swell, silver diapason on diapason, and ring and echo all about him in the dark and silent church.

One gay spring day, when all the almond trees were in flower, old Rouquet came in to ring the Angelus and found monsieur le Curé at his organ, hands very cold and still, and tired old head resting on the silent keyboard. And it seems there was a look on his face as if he had been most warmly complimented and welcomed to Paradise by Herr Johann Sebastian Bach himself.

No wonder then that the people of Virette came to believe that up above the blue sky of Provence there was now a new saint—Saint Auguste Mathieu Tavat. And forever at his service, two little angels, who took it in joyous turn to pump ethereal air into a great celestial organ on which Saint Auguste Mathieu Tavat played blissfully away to his heart's content and the glory of the Lord.

Furthermore they sensibly decided to keep their saint in the family as it were. Official canonization, it was felt, was quite unnecessary. All Virette recognized he was a saint, so why invite lengthy and complicated investigation? Besides they were not going to have their saint badgered and importuned by strangers.

No, no, it was their solemn duty to shield him in heaven as they had done on earth. Their saint was going to enjoy his music in utmost tranquillity for a time, at least. Then later on, when he had

familiarized himself with the vast spaces of eternity and the shining pedals of his celestial organ, they might venture to ask for a little favour or two for themselves.

And so, after a decent and kindly interval, and strangely enough, on the very same day, up to the saintly organist rose the humble requests of Fortuné the angler, the young couple Bérard, and pretty little Louise of the Mas Saint Gilles. And presumably one little angel went on pumping away whilst the other plucked at the new shining robes of the happy organist and cried, "*Tiens, monsieur le Saint!* Three messages from Virette!"

"From Virette!" exclaimed monsieur le Saint and struck a chord of warm delight. But alas, such is the terrible strength of habit that he then waved a vague hand, saying, "Put them down, *mon petit.* I will attend to them when I have finished my fugue."

And on the following Sunday, having finished his fugue, but with his head still swimming with melody, the kindly saint found Fortuné's little request and gave it his generous if wandering attention. Otherwise there can be no accounting for what happened.

Now Fortuné, you must understand, was a cunning and ardent angler who knew every deep hole and eddy in the river that laps lazily under the three stone bridges of Virette. Yet never once had poor Fortuné coaxed to his net a great shining fish that he could proudly show to his neighbours. Every man and boy of Virette knew that no large fish swam in their river—and sensibly resigned themselves to bowls. All except Fortuné. He fished on. He tried float fishing, ledgering, paternostering, dapping and spinning. He tried scoured worms, lively gentles, delicate caddis-grubs, ripe cherries, fat grasshoppers and a delicious paste of his own invention made of breadcrumbs, honey and minced pig's liver moistened with a dash of strong beer. All in vain. A few gudgeon perhaps from time to time or a starveling of a chub, but never any real reward for all his cunning and long bitter experience.

Well, on this eventful Sunday Fortuné went down to his favourite "swim." The river ran deep between a shelving clay bank on one side and thick beds of tall tangled reeds on the other, and with patient, skilful fingers he set up his tackle and sat down on his basket opposite a gap in the reeds. He baited his hook with stewed wheat and threw in a liberal handful "*pour encourager les autres.*" But nothing happened.

Then, *pécaire*, he remembered he had asked for perch, and even a saint can hardly be expected to make perch bite eagerly on vulgar stewed wheat. So he attached a fine worm and cast again.

Scarcely had his float touched the water than it bobbed up and down and sailed merrily away. Fortuné, crimson with excitement,

struck gently but firmly. The water boiled, his rod bent almost double, and upstream tore the fish, and then altered its mind, and turned and doubled back. But it was already beginning to tire. Its angry rushes became short vicious stabs, and slowly, expertly, Fortuné drew it in, over his landing-net, and, *oop*, lifted it out!

And *vive, vive Saint Auguste Mathieu Tavàt*, it was the fish of his dreams—his prize catch—a hog-backed perch, prickly dorsal fin proudly erect, dark stripes gleaming on its golden-olive flanks.

With his heart singing loudly within him, Fortuné fixed on another worm and cast in once more. And immediately the float dashed away, and his rod bent so sharply that for one awful moment he thought it would break. But no, in less than a minute, another bouncing perch flapped in his landing-net. And then another, and still another; and *patatras*, within the hour thirty splendid fish gasped and flapped in his open creel. And by it sat Fortuné, pale, stunned, bewildered, all bright joy fallen from him.

This was too easy. This was not fishing. Any mean fool with string, pin and worm could catch these imbeciles. He picked up a worm and hurled it into the water. Instantly the quiet surface broke. And *aïe, aïe, aïe*, there they were, a dozen or more, fighting savagely for the privilege of swallowing it. This was what came of asking a favour of a good saint who knew nothing of fishing, who naïvely thought it was all a matter of in-my-worm-out-my-fish as speedily and easily as possible. Saint Peter now, he would have understood.

"*Oh-là!* What a catch!" broke in an excited voice. Fortuné turned. There stood a boy, a ragged gipsy boy, dark eyes popping out of his brown face. "And they are good, those fish, monsieur!"

"Then take them," growled Fortuné and tipped them out at his feet, shining bellies gleaming like pearls in the sun. And he got up and joylessly began to take his rod to pieces.

Nor was this all. By sunset the whole village buzzed angrily at the news that seven caravans were spilling gipsies all along the river bank, and thin wisps of smoke came up from the fires on which they were grilling the catch of their hungry lives. Moreover the gipsies decided to linger a while by this Elysian stream—to the mounting fury of all Virette, for these epicures were not only partial to fish fresh caught, they also relished new laid eggs followed by a chicken now and again or a goose or a fine plump rabbit, not to mention a little choice dessert, fresh peaches or grapes or a melon, together with any other little delicacy on which they could lay deft, thieving fingers.

And when at long last they broke camp, they stole away into the dawn with such considerate stealth that not a soul on their route rose to wave them farewell. And this was indeed a pity for

with them went Jacques Baret's horse, the Labises' goat, the fat pig of Rosine the midwife and all the washing she had hastily slung on her bushes before she hurried away at sunrise to deliver a flabbergasted mother of triplets.

Fortuné reproachfully told himself that he ought to have known that even up there in Paradise, monsieur le Curé would never make an angler much less see farther than the end of his trusting nose. And that honest angler began to lie awake at night, nagged by a guilty feeling of responsibility for all these troubles—with the exception, of course, of the triplets. Oddly enough somebody else felt responsible for them—the young couple Bérard.

It appears that with the fine exuberance of youth, Madame Bérard had decided she wanted a family, but not at the usual leisurely pace. "But certainly!" she cried to her doubting young husband. "Certainly it will be hard work for a couple of years, and then, there they will be, running about, three strong little sons, all at one go. Then I shall ask for three little girls with black eyes and curly hair. Why, it will be absolutely wonderful! Six children and only two weeks wasted in bed. And we shall still be quite young, and we can settle down and enjoy life with our six lovely children. Oh, come on, Justus, we can but ask!"

Imagine now the surprise with which monsieur the new saint received this unusual request. "*Péchère!*" he muttered. "This is beyond my comprehension. And the Bérards of all people! I cannot even imagine how they will squeeze them in round that table of theirs. But who am I to doubt the honest ingenuity of this patriotic, family loving couple!"

And *miséricorde*, it was plain that the good saint was thinking not of young Justus Bérard and his bride, but of his eldest brother and his wife who worked all the hours God gave in their crowded little *mas* on the mountainside. For it was there that the triplets arrived, all boys and all uproariously healthy, to the delight of their ten brothers and sisters and the consternation of their parents.

And now we come to pretty little Louise of the Mas Saint Gilles, only child of doting parents, with a snug little dowry, nearly twenty one but still unmarried for the simple reason that pretty little Louise was far too shrewd and calculating to fall in love for love's sweet sake. She knew exactly what she wanted, and her little petition to monsieur le Saint, gave the very clearest specifications.

"Now this," sighed the patient saint, "completely staggers me. For Louise Rousseau of the Mas Saint Gilles, a husband of a suitable age but with enough experience of women to make him an appreciative and faithful partner!"

Then his face cleared. "*Vaï!* But of course! Now I understand! And that worthy demoiselle certainly deserves a most excellent husband."

But that ingenuous saint had not understood. Far from it.

A week or so later a plump, middle aged gentleman from Montélimar called at the Mas Saint Gilles to buy a few casks of wine. He was, it appeared, a prosperous manufacturer of nougat, excellent nougat that simply sold itself. And to the open-mouthed bewilderment of all concerned, the gentleman fell deeply in love, not with pretty little Louise, but with her aunt! Yes, her maiden aunt, her father's sister Louise, a quiet pious woman of forty who lived with them and showed her gratitude for home and board by ironing, mending and cooking, all with the resigned efficiency of one who has never raised a flutter in the breast of any man.

Such was the warm sincerity of the gentleman's devotion that Tante Louise slowly thawed and opened like a rose of late autumn. And soon, very soon, in a grand dress of grey Lyons silk, real lace at her bosom and wrists, gold ring on her finger and wedding certificate in her reticule, she drove away, mistress of the gentleman's heart, his tall fine house in Montélimar, and all his excellent nougat, "*aux noisettes et aux fruits*".

Now events like this shake any village to its foundations. Furthermore the people of Virette are truly Provençal—they find it hard to be silent. No sooner had one remarkable story leaked out than a hundred others went the rounds. And every story told of a simple request to their saintly curé with the most unforeseen consequences. Not to mention the unprintable ones invented by that ribald hussy, the widow Honorine.

Something had to be done. But what? It was so obvious that their beloved curé was doing his celestial best for them just as he had done on earth. But on earth there had always been someone to pluck at his sleeve, to jog his memory, to remind him that time marches on, and with it births, marriages and deaths. Whereas now . . . up there . . .

Then they also had to consider that in time even he would notice that nobody in Virette now dared to invite his help even in the smallest matter. He might suspect the real reason. Ah no, this was decidedly one of those delicate problems that need the most sympathetic handling. So after much brisk argument a deputation was elected and waited upon monsieur their new curé, a cheerful priest and a good Provençal.

He listened in silence as they poured out a suitable selection of their stories and then said gravely, "Leave everything to me, *mes enfants*. I will arrange matters in my sermon on Sunday."

Now it is a lamentable loss to the literature of Provence that the

poet, Mistral, was not in Virette that Sunday, for he would certainly have set down word for word the sermon of that tactful priest.

But I am not the poet, Mistral, and I can only tell you, as best I may, that as he spoke the people of Virette saw their curé again, baptizing their children, consoling their dying, forever at their service, forever forgetful of self, meals and all personal affairs. And as if by a miracle, each in his heart found the right words, the only words: "Look, monsieur le saint, if we are silent it is not that we have grown indifferent or ungrateful. No, no, it is that we wish you to be free from all *tracasserie*—this one asking for this, that one asking for that. It is that we truly desire for you this peace which passeth all understanding."

And when they looked up, there was monsieur their new curé, waving his arms in splendid peroration. "Yes, Auguste Mathieu Tavat, when we hear the music of the wind in the trees, the carol of the birds in the dawn, we shall remember you."

And he nodded to Albertine Cadet quietly crying at the little organ, and she blew her nose and began to play, "*Au ciel! Au ciel!*"

And with one accord they all rose to their feet and began to sing, their hearts very warm within them to think of monsieur their saint up there, now playing his music in everlasting heavenly peace.

There was silence for a moment. Then old Gassin took out a great yellow handkerchief and began to clean his spectacles.

"Now," said Uncle Jules severely, "now you will perhaps understand how it used to be here, with our saints."

And who could doubt him?

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WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLISS . . .

An efficiency expert travelling in North America noticed an Indian brave lolling indolently on a railway platform.

"Chief," he exclaimed, "why don't you get yourself a job?"

The Indian smiled lazily. "Why should I?"

"Well," said the expert, slightly nettled, "if you got yourself a job you could build up a nice bank account for yourself."

"Why?" asked the Indian.

"Why?" shouted the expert. "So you can retire, of course, and never have to work again!"

"But I'm not working now," pointed out the Indian, pleasantly.

THE SUMMER GAME

Cricket is the greatest and the most "English" of games—the very religion of games to some of us

STEPHEN PHILLIPS, 1864-1915

This is the place : here is the story told
Of those first players in that far-off June
That shines still on these Hampshire downs. Behold
The very turf, the pitch where some high noon
"Lumpy" would choose his sloping wicket, soon
To rouse deep-throated chorus from the ring,
Vying with Beldham, Walker, Brett to bring
Fame to the tales that Nyren's readers con,
Names for undreamt of rhymers yet to sing,
When primroses are out at Hambledon.

ERIC PARKER, *Windmill Down*

Not Quite Cricket!

It was the last ball of the over. He halted at the wicket before going back for his run, glared at Mr. Harcourt, who had been driven out to umpire by his colleagues—greatly to the regret of the landlord of *The Shoes*—took another reef in his belt, shook out another inch in his braces, spat on his hand, swung his arm three or four times in a meditative sort of way, grasped the ball tightly in his colossal palm, and then turned smartly about and marched off like a Pomeranian grenadier and vanished over the brow of the hill. At last, after a long stillness, the ground shook, the grasses waved violently, a loud puffing sound alarmed the butterflies, and the blacksmith, looking more like Venus Anadyomene than ever, came thundering over the crest. The world held its breath.

But alas for human ambitions! Mr. Harcourt, swaying slightly from leg to leg, had understood the menacing glare of the bowler, had marked the preparation for a titanic effort, and—for he was not a poet for nothing—knew exactly what was going on. And Mr. Harcourt sober had a very pleasant sense of humour, but Mr. Harcourt rather drunk was a perfect demon of impishness. As the giant whirlwind of vulcanic energy rushed past him to the crease, Mr. Harcourt, quivering with excitement and internal laughter, and wobbling uncertainly upon his pins, bellowed, "No ball!"

It was too late for the unfortunate bowler to stop himself. The ball flew out of his hand like a bullet and hit third-slip, who was not looking, full pitch on the knee-cap. With a yell of agony third-slip began hopping about like a stork until he tripped over a tussock of grass and fell on his face in a bed of nettles, from which he sprang up again with another drum-splitting yell. The blacksmith himself was flung forward by his own irresistible momentum, startled out of his wits by Mr. Harcourt's bellow in his ear, and thrown off his balance by his desperate effort to prevent himself from delivering the ball, and the result was that his gigantic feet got mixed up among each other and he fell heavily in the centre of the wicket, knocking up a cloud of dust and dandelion-seed and twisting his ankle. The urchins howled like intoxicated banshees. The gaffers gaped. Mr. Harcourt gazed at the heavens. Mr. Harcourt did not think the world had ever been quite such a capital place, even though he laughed internally so much that he had got hiccups.

A. G. MACDONELL, *England Their England*

Eton v. Harrow

Lord's—Lord's on Friday evening!
Two men out and an hour to play—
Lose another, and that's the end of it,
Why not call it a harrowing day?
Harrow's lips are at last on the cup,
Harrow's tail unmistakably up,
And Eton! Eton can only pray
For a captain's heart in a captain's breast,
And some decent batting among the rest,
And sit and shiver and hope for the best—
If those two fellows can only stay!

C. A. ALINGTON, *Eton Faces*

In Buttercup Time

A rural cricket match in buttercup time, seen and heard through the trees; it is surely the loveliest scene in England and the most disarming sound. From the ranks of the unseen dead for ever passing along our country lanes on their eternal journey, the Englishmen fall out for a moment to look over the gate of the cricket field and smile.

SIR JAMES BARRIE, 1860-1937

Beat!

Last week was played a match in White-Conduit-Fields by Islington; between 11 *Londoners on one side, and* 11 *men of Kent on the other side, for* 5*s. a head; at which time, being in eager pursuit of the game, the Kentish men having the wickets, two Londoners striving with expedition to gain the ball, met each other with that fierceness, that hitting their heads together they both fell backwards without stirring hand or foot, and lay deprived of sense for a considerable time, and 'tis not yet known (at that time) whether they will recover. The Kentish men were beat.*

The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post, 1720

Not Hout!

Summer after summer the game goes on down in the Cotswolds. David Smith thunders over the earth and bowls his yorker. A ripple of clapping announces that the fifty is up—for seven wickets—and the boy by the scoreboard sorts out his tins and looks for a Nought and a Seven. In the silences that come over the game you can hear lovely summertime noises, the low hum of a hot June day as it goes towards evening. When the shadows are lengthening and in the slanting light soft sheen falls on everybody's flannels, the match is finished. Very soon the little field is vacant. A bird runs quickly over the grass, stops quite still for a moment, then runs on again. Dear cricket of the Cotswolds, would that I were playing you every day—if only to be given the benefit of the doubt by George (the umpire). "Not Hout!" he would be sure to say when the bowler hit me on the leg. "Not quite hout, but nearly."

NEVILLE CARDUS, *The Summer Game*

Titan

He (Dr. W. G. Grace) revolutionized cricket. He turned it from an accomplishment into a science; he united in his mighty self all the good points of all the good players and made utility the criterion of style; he made his execution equal his invention.

Jubilee Book of Cricket

Good Advice

Dear John,—So I am to bowl against them Englanders. You wants to win, don't you now? Then don't be so stupid as to roll your ground. Yours, C.A.

Well known bowler's advice to his captain on the eve of a famous match against Clarke's All England Eleven

SAM SMALL'S BETTER HALF

Never before were two men so evenly matched!

by ERIC KNIGHT

"IF there's one thing I'd like to do," Mully Small said, as she sat before the hearth, "it's travel. Now we're wealthy and retired, as tha maught say, I'd like to go round the world."

Sam ignored the gambit altogether as he put down the evening paper.

"What," he asked, rhetorically and pugnaciously, "would the British working man be without his pint of ale at the day's end?"

"That's something the world'll never know till one of 'em tries it," Mully snapped. "And as I don't suppose tha's in the mood for noble experiments, for goodness' sake away ye go down to the pub, for I see I'll get no peace until tha does. Although I did think, since I'm poorly, that tha might have spent one evening at home."

Sam got up and stood undecided. Truly Mully didn't look so well, and he wanted to stay. But he wanted his evening mug of ale, too. A sort of short, but bitter, tug-of-war took place inside him—and the ale won.

"Now I'll not be long," he said, in a tone of hopeful appeasement.

Mully refused the scant olive branch.

"Ah'll gamble," she said sarcastically, in her broadest Yorkshire dialect. "Chucking out time!"

"Now isn't that just like a woman's suspicions, for thee?" Sam asked the vacant air. "I'll be back long before chucking out."

At the time Sam really meant what he said—if only to prove to Mully how grossly she wronged him with her accusations. But when he got to the pub, unfortunately there was an argument going on. Moreover, it was just the sort of argument that needed the sagacity, erudition, and forensic abilities of Sam Small—and Sam Small was the best man in all Yorkshire for giving his opinion in an argument.

"It's this way, Sam," explained Rowlie Helliker. "It says here as how a doctor thinks this Russian chap has got—"

He peered at the newspaper.

"—anyway, the word means a split personality, it says."

"Oh aye," responded Sam nonchalantly. "Schizoperennial."

"What's coming off here?" asked Huckle, the landlord.

"That's just the technicological name o' the disease," Sam said. "It means a chap splits into two personalities—that's what."

"Ah've seen two personalities," offered Annie, the barmaid. "It were in t'cinema once. One were—"

"Ah've come to a decision," interrupted Gaffer Sitherthwick. "If ye mean to stand theer and tell me that a chap can divide into two, then what Ah say is—it ain't human, it's just dirty propaganda."

"Hold on, Gaffer," Sam said. "Ye see, science has discovered that every one of us is a couple of people, really. And ye can't beat science when it comes to—to—to science, can ye?"

"Science is off to get itself into a hole some day, if it goes on discovering things," warned Capper Wambley darkly.

"Well, ye've heard o' twins, haven't ye?" Rowlie Helliker offered. "Happen this here schizoperennia's like that, only a chap becomes twins after he's born instead of before."

"Nonsense," the Capper said. "Ah would have heard of it before this. Ah'm the oldest chap here, and I never heard of that happening."

"But it's only just come out, like," Sam explained.

"Ah still don't believe a chap can split in two," roared the Gaffer.

"Nor me, nawther," agreed Capper Wambley.

"Hold on, British fair play every time," Rowlie Helliker shouted. "Two against one. Now what I say, is this . . ."

And so the argument rumbled, with words flowing ponderously and sagely in the Yorkshire way, and the white arms of Annie, the barmaid, flashing up and down as she gave the long pull on the mild and bitter pumps. Until, in no time whatsoever, as you might say, there rose the voice of Huckle above the din, his voice sounding the well-known British curfew, "Time, gentlemen, please! Time!"

Sam Small stood, like Cinderella hearing the stroke of midnight.

"Eigh, by gum," he muttered, aghast. "And I promised Mully faithful I'd be home afore chucking out . . ."

Off Sam went, through the door as fast as his stubby legs would carry him. As he skeltered up along the Green, the thought seeped into his mind that if he got home quickly he might be able to say he had left before closing time, but had strolled home lazily.

He began to feel guilty—not because he was preparing the evidence for another lie, but because he had left Mully alone all evening. He wished he hadn't done that.

He was feeling angry at himself, and then . . .

It happened!

There was a flash, a sort of silent explosion, a whirling of planets and comets in an endless purple void, and Sam Small found himself sitting on the pavement, half-dazed.

"By gum," he muttered thickly. "I must have bumped into the lamp post."

But then, as he collected his senses, he saw another man, similarly situated on the pavement.

"So—it was thee bumped into me," Sam began pugnaciously. "Why doesn't tha look where tha's going?"

"It's six o' one and half a dozen o' t'other, lad."

"Now don't argue wi' me," Sam groaned. "Gie us a hand up."

"How about thee gi'ing me a hand up?" the other said.

"Why, I never met such a nasty, unobliging chap," Sam said. "But I've no time to argue wi' thee. My wife's poorly and I promised to be home afore chucking out time, and here I am . . ."

"Beer-swiller!" accused the other. "If thy wife's poorly, why doesn't tha sit with her? That's what I've been doing at ma home over the Green."

"Thy home?" breathed Sam.

His voice rose in suspicion, and a chilly vibration ran up his spine. For he had an eerie feeling that the voice of the other man was familiar—too familiar, somehow.

"Who are ye?" Sam cried.

They both rose from the pavement, and Sam dragged the other under the street light. Then he gasped. For Sam Small found that he was looking at none other than himself!

For a second only was Sam nonplussed, and then his brain functioned. He grabbed the other tightly.

"A blooming imposter!" he said. "I've got thee!"

"Imposter thysen," the other said. "I'm Sam Small."

"Oooo, you liar. I'm Sam Small."

"Now, now, don't contradict. Look at me and see if I don't look like Sam Small."

"By gum, so tha does," Sam admitted. Then he moaned, "Eigh, don't go mixing me all up, or ye'll have me so conflummoxed I won't know what to think. How can ye prove ye're Sam Small?"

"Well," the other began, glaring suspiciously. "I have a wife whose name is Mully. And I have a daughter rising seventeen whose name's Vinnie, and . . ."

"I'll be jiggered," Sam said. "I see tha's a very clever imposter indeed. At least, tha's looked up all ma background. But tha's slipped up, my lad, for I know where I have thee!"

As he spoke Sam tugged at the heavy gold chain on his waistcoat

and drew out a great turnip of a gold watch, and snapped open the back with a gesture.

"There," he said. "Read that. For I know it by heart. It says on it, *To Sam Small, from his loyal wife, Millicent, on their wedding day.*"

"Well, I'll be jiggered," said the other. "For mine says exactly the same—here!"

And, with a similar gesture, tugging at a similar chain, he snapped open the back of a similar watch.

"Oooo, by gum," Sam moaned. "I *am* in trouble. I must have done summat wrong. And here I stand, not knowing whether I'm me, or tha's me—or I'm thee—or whether us is both we."

He stood a second.

"Why, that's it," he yelped.

"What's it?"

"We're both me—both of us. It's schizoperennial. Ma personality's split wide open, just like we've been arguing about down at the pub—and I've become two on us."

"Well, by gum. Think o' that, now," said the other. "But—but what can us do about it?"

"Look, this is a very important happening, lad," Sam said. "And we've got to go careful about it. I think, before anyone sees us and spoils it all, we'd better take a walk out on the moor and discuss it proper. For the sake of getting it straight a bit, suppose I call thee Sammywell, and call mysen Sam? That'll get us separated for purposes o' discussion, as ye might say."

And off they went over the moor, with Sam explaining his view of what had happened.

"If we handle it carefully," said Sam, "there's a fortune in it. For instance, doctors and such wi' scientific curiosity—why they'd pay a right lot o' brass to meet a couple of chaps like us."

"I don't care for doctors, Sam. Happen they'd want to operate on us," Sammywell ventured.

"Aye, I don't care for 'em, either. But happen we could get a tent and travel round wi' the fairs—we'd be champion curiosities, and people'd pay a shilling to see us."

"I'd object to being a freak, like," Sammywell droned.

"Nay, there's nowt wrong wi' making a little honest brass, lad, and I've not got it all worked out yet, but there's brass in the general idea. Just look at t'brass Ah've just made off ma self-doffing spindle."

"Aye," said Sammywell, "but an invention's a fact."

"So is this a fact," Sam said. "Think on it! The Government might take an interest in us, as tha might say. Why, if they could

multiply every man by two they could double the manpower o' t'army ! "

" Aye, but us can't sit out here all night, lad, while tha works it out. There's Mully waiting up for me at home."

" Well, we can't go home," Sam expostulated, " not the two on us."

" That's so," Sammywell agreed. " But one on us could stay out here tonight and puzzle out what's best to do. T'other can go home and say nowt to Mully. It won't be cold sleeping out here for thee, Sam—and in the morning I can slip out and bring thee a bite to eat, like."

" Hold on a bit. I don't like that idea—thee going home to my wife. It—it ain't moral ! "

" But since tha explained it to me that we're both one, when I go home it's really thee, too, tha knows," Sammywell said. " Now be sensible ; one of us has got to take a back seat for a while until we get this all figured out. Why don't you go away for a few days and we'll both put our thinking caps on ? "

" Me go away ? " echoed Sam.

Then he thought a while. He began to see possibilities in the suggestion. If he went away he could have a right good beano.

Sam glowed inwardly. But he put on a sad face.

" Eigh, it's sad and all to think of a man giving up the rightful comfort of his own hearth and home, and going forth, an uncherished wanderer on the face o' t'earth, as ye might say. But for the sake of Mully and her peace o' mind, I make the great sacrifice. Good-bye."

" Where are ye going ? "

" Why—I'll cut over the moor and be in Bradley by morning. Then I'll drop in the bank and get a little cash—"

" Hey. Thee be careful wi' my savings account," Sammywell wavered.

" *Our* savings account, Sammywell, lad. So long."

And then Sammywell was alone.

" Sam," he shouted into the darkness. " When'll ye be back ? "

" Expect me when ye see me," floated back the voice of Sam. " Keep the home fires burning, Sammywell. Keep the home fires burning ! "

" Do you want a railway ticket, lad ? " asked the man behind the little bars at the station, helpfully.

" Aye, that's it exactly," Sam said. " But Mully generally tends to all this part of it, and I'm at a bit of a loss wi'out her. What sort o' tickets have ye got ? "

"Oh, first, third, excursion, return."

"I'll have a return."

"One return. Good. Where to?"

"Why, back here, of course, gormless."

The chap, thinking Sam was kidding him, got quite upset. So the argument began. Sam got his Yorkshire up and wouldn't be pinned down as to where he was going.

"Now any fool can let people buy what they want," Sam pointed out. "But I've read it takes a real salesman to sell to a doubtful customer."

"But *where* do you want to go?"

"How would I know afore I hear what expense I'm off to run into? No sensible man runs ahead of his brass. So cite me a few bargains."

The man blew out his breath and picked up a printed list.

"Llandudno, very special, twenty four shillings?" he offered.

"Couldn't spell it," Sam said. "I wouldn't live in a town I couldn't spell. I'd feel all defeated, like."

"Scarborough, thirty one and—"

"Dearie, no. I had a chum went there once, broke his leg, he did. I'd be that sad thinking on him. He was putting his trowsis on, he was, and just toppled over and broke his leg."

"They could set it, couldn't they?"

"Aye, but his wife were that upset, 'cause his leg didn't look the same. She were always after him to break the other. They never had a peaceful day together after that. A plumber, he were. Name o' Billy Sandyson. Ever meet him?"

"No! Blackpool, eleven and four?"

"Blackpool? Now tha's getting me interested."

"Shall it be Blackpool, then?"

"Don't rush me. I were there once. I ate so many whelks wi' vinegar I were sick on the train coming home. Eigh, I had a champion time."

"Then it'll be Blackpool?"

"Hold on a minute. If I don't use the return part in ten days, can I cash it in on a full fare coming back?"

"Yes," sighed the man, without thinking. "Yes."

"Then sold!" said Sam.

And off he went to Blackpool.

Sam did have a rare old time at Blackpool. There was so much to do that he'd sally out each morning and never even go back to his boarding house for meals. But this didn't matter, as there were any number of places where a chap could buy winkles and cockles and fried fish and pease pudding and ices. And since

it was a holiday without Mully, Sam didn't feel so bad about flinging his money about.

And Sam winked at all the lasses there on their holidays—for he was beginning to feel quite a dog.

One day, by the bandstand, a big, fine looking woman smiled at him. Sam bought himself a walking stick on the strength of it. The next day she smiled again, so he got himself a straw hat for one and tuppence.

Then one day it got warm, and everyone went paddling on the sands. The sands were a bit squoggy at Blackpool, but Sam, full of holiday freedom, didn't mind. With his trousers rolled up, he paddled and splashed to his heart's content—all through the day, until the sun began to go down, blood red, and a chill wind came in suddenly from the sea.

Sam Small shivered. "Happen I got ma trowsis wet," he said to himself. "Wouldn't Mully give me a talking to!"

He went up higher on the sands, intending to put on his stockings and boots, and then go by the bandstand to see what the fine looking woman thought of his straw hat. But, somehow, when he was dressed, he didn't feel like strolling. And yet—he wanted something.

"Now what can it be?" Sam said to himself. "Happen I want summat to eat."

So he thought of pork pies and saveloys and sausage rolls and oysters, and all the things sold at the shops; but it wasn't any of those he wanted.

He tried to puzzle it out, considering a walk on the promenade as against a stroll on the pier, a look at the zoo or a go on the merry-go-round, or perhaps the ferris wheel. But it wasn't any of these things he wanted.

As he sat, the sun sank, the wet sands glowed in the dusk, and a sort of cosmic sadness washed in from the dying day and seeped over him. The lights in the shops behind him popped on, one by one, and the electric signs came on to spangle the holiday front of the town, and people laughed and screamed. And over the ocean the day ebbed away to other lands and there was nothing left of the sea but its hushing.

Finally Sam gave up trying to puzzle it out and went back to his boarding house. He was in a strange bad temper.

"I think I've copped a cold," he told his landlady.

"More like some o' the stuff tha's been eating," she said. "Tripe and cowheel and chitterlins and eel pies and polony and trunnel pies and hokey-pokey and black pudding . . ."

"Are ye selling summat?" Sam said. "If I weren't upset when I come home, I am now."

"Then I'll gie thee some lickerish powder. I allus used to give ma husband lickerish powder. A fine chap he were . . ."

"Thy husband? Where's he now?"

"Eigh, he's deead."

"I tell ye, it's nowt I ate. What's more, if it were I wouldn't take lickerish powder. I tell ye I've copped a cold."

"Then I'll fix thee a mustard footbath."

"I don't want no footbath. Mully gi's me hot rum and treacle."

"Well, I've no rum. I'll gie ye the treacle now and ye can take the rum tomorrow."

"By gum, there's no help from women. Tha sounds like Mully hersen."

"Heaven pity her, if she has to put up wi' thee."

"By gow, I should ha' known better than to expect either sense or sympathy i' Lancashire!"

"Huh!" snorted the landlady. "Yorkshire!"

"That's done it!" roared Sam. "That's the final insult. First thing in the morn I'm off home to Mully."

And home he went.

As Sam Small swung along by the Green in the twilight, suddenly his happiness fled. For, as if for the first time, he remembered Sammywell.

"By gum," he breathed, "if I walk in and he's there, Mully'll find out the whole thing, and want to know where I've been, then I'll cop Halifax. I'd better go sly."

So Sam crept up to his cottage and looked in the window. And there he saw Mully, knitting as she rocked in the chair before the fire, with Sammywell reading aloud to her.

Sam felt queer and hopeless and unwanted, seeing another man before his fire, with himself outside and tired—and badly in need of a good cup of tea.

He retreated into the garden and began flipping bits of stone at the window. After a long time the door opened and a beam of light poured out. With it, from far back in the room, came Mully's voice. Sam heard it pouring over him, like a rush of warm blood in his chest.

"If that's them Kidderley bairns again, Sam, shout out to them not to be naughty."

"Psst," Sam hissed. "Sammywell! I want a word wi' thee. Meet me up the Green corner."

"What is it, Sam, love?" came Mully's voice.

"Nowt," called back Sammywell. "I think I'll get ma jacket and take a stroll, Mully—and a smoke. Then I won't choke the house up wi' baccy smoke."

"Aye, do. A breath of air'll do thee good, Sam," said Mully's voice.

Then the door closed. Sam stalked up to the corner of the Green. Over and over again he heard Mully's words—and the tones. Her voice had been soft and warm. And she had called Sammywell "Sam, love." That wasn't like Mully. She never called *him* "love."

By the time he saw Sammywell approaching, Sam was fair hopping with anger and jealousy.

"Tha's off to take a walk wi' me, lad," Sam growled.

"Why, what's wrong, Sam?"

"Never heed what's wrong. I've just decided that it's high time I came home and took ma rightful and proper place beside my wife—ye—ye—Judas!"

"But, Sam, I thought ye wanted to go away and have a fling."

"Well, I've flung—and now it's thy turn to go away."

"Oh no, Sam," said Sammywell self righteously. "I'm that comfortable. I stay home evenings wi' Mully and—"

"Aye. I heard her gi'ing thee the soft-soap voice. An' her ma wife?"

"*Our* wife, Sam."

"Now don't conflummox me," Sam groaned. "Tha's had a comfortable week—now it's ma turn. Go away for a visit."

"But, Sam, tha's the one who likes to go away. I'm the one who likes to stay home."

"Ooah, by gum," moaned Sam. "Do I have to argue wi' thee? Look, I'm hungry—I haven't had ma tea yet—and I've been poorly. Now hop it like a good chap."

"Not me," said Sammywell. "My place is in the home, and there's where I'm off right now."

"Well, I'm off wi' thee, then."

"And have her find out? Nay, I'm not bahn to have her upset."

"Now look here, Sammywell. If I know Mully, she's off to find out sooner or later—so it might as well be sooner, and then I can have ma tea!"

"And I say ye'll not . . ."

But away darted Sam, full tilt. For he realized that if he got home first, then the whole problem would be shifted on to the shoulders of Sammywell.

Down the Green went Sam with Sammywell legging it after him. They were both, of course, evenly matched. But unfortunately Sam had to open the gate and the door. He managed the first all right, but before he reached the door Sammywell grabbed him, and down they went, wrestling and struggling. They were ;)

intent that they hardly realized the door had opened until they heard Mully's voice.

"What's up now?"

They stopped wrestling and blinked into the light.

So the three stood!

"Ooah, ma dear," moaned Mully. "Get in this house, here—afore anyone sees us."

Shamefacedly the two men went into the cottage and stood on the hearth. Mully looked at them, and then flopped into the rocking chair and began to cry.

"Now what tricks are ye playing on me, Sam Small?" she cried. "Whichever one on ye is Sam?"

"We're both Sam," Sammywell said.

"To think ye never told me ye had a twin brother," sobbed Mully. "But one of ye's Sam—and when I find out which one it is—he's off to wish he'd never been born."

"Now hold on, Mully," Sam said. "We're both us—that is, we're both me."

Then he explained as best he could about how his personality had split the week before.

"Well, which one's been here this past week?" Mully asked.

"Me," said Sammywell, quickly. "He's been on a trip to Blackpool!"

"Ha, ye scallywag," said Mully triumphantly. "Now I know which one's Sam Small. It's thee! So tha would go gallivanting away and leave thy true wife wi' a stranger . . ."

She advanced on Sam, but Sammywell interposed a hand.

"Nay, Mully," he said. "Don't be angry. Hasn't it been better with him away? Haven't I stayed by thy side this week and nursed thee through a cold?"

"Aye," she said. "Tha's been that considerate and kind—I knew there must be summat wrong. I were too happy for it to be true."

She sat down and wept, and Sam stood, head hanging, and shuffled his feet. For a while he thought, and then went to his wife.

"Mully Small," he said. "Do ye mean that? Have ye really been so happy wi'—wi' yon, while I've been away?"

Now Mully was, after all, a woman. And she couldn't help being a bit spiteful in her answer.

"Sam Small," she said. "I've never been so cherished in all ma born days. It's been the best week of ma married life."

Sam stared into the fire and drew his breath.

"I see," he said softly. "Well, somehow there ain't much for a chap to say when he finds out he's failed, is there? What I

mean is—well, 'twould be a poor man who'd stand in the way of his wife's happiness, so—goodbye—and good luck, lass."

Sam turned on his heel and made for the door, while Mully watched as in a trance. Perhaps she would have let him go, but Sammywell's voice wakened her.

"Ye see, Sam," cried Sammywell triumphantly. "I told ye I were the man to make her happy."

That started Mully.

"Now hold on," she said. "I've got summat to say about all this. Come back, lad, and sit here by the hearth. If this is true about this here split personality, what us has got to do is think it out."

"Aye, but us has done all the thinking us can. Why couldn't we all stay here?" Sammywell suggested.

"What, me live wi' two husbands?" breathed Mully. "That's bigamy."

"But me and Sam is both the same husband," Sammywell pointed out.

"Aye," said Mully, "we know that, because we're open-minded, but I'm afraid the British law hasn't caught up wi' such modern things, and'll come to the conclusion that two husbands is two."

"Hold on," said Sam. "Tha's nobbut had one marriage."

"Then one on ye's churched, and the other's unchurched, and that's still against the law."

"Aye," Sam said.

"Don't interrupt," said Mully. "Now all keep quiet till I think this out."

For a long time she sat, and then she sighed and rose.

"Well, I've decided," she said. "Ma mother allus used to say to me, 'When in doubt, go to sleep.'"

"So?" crooned Sammywell, smiling.

"So," she said. "I'm off to bed and go to sleep—and ye two are off outside."

"But look here, Mully," Sammywell groaned. "I don't like—"

"Neither do I," she chipped in. "But ye doubled yoursen wi'out ma help. Happen ye can best sort it out the same road."

And firmly she chivvied the two of them to the door and pushed them out. Only as Sam went past, she said, quietly, "Don't come home till there's nobbut one of ye."

Then the door closed, the bolt clicked, and the two were out in the night.

"Now, we'd better take a walk and think some more," Sam

said. "And thee stick close to me if ye know what's good. We'll take a turn on the moor."

As the two reached the Green, they still wore the same thoughtful expressions.

"Have ye thought of owt?" Sammywell asked.

"Look, I'm fair sick to deeath o' thee," Sam warned. "Now be quiet."

He paused and looked about. They were by the lamp post.

"Here's where we first met," Sam mused.

"If tha'd nobbut stayed away," Sammywell began.

"Now look here, ma lad," Sam burst out. "One more peep out o' thee and tha'll get a thick lip. Why, for two pins . . ."

Then, as Sam lifted his hand, he seemed to hear the words of Mully, whispered as if for him alone, "Don't come back till there's nobbut one of ye."

The idea raced through his brain.

"Sam Small," cried Sammywell, in terror. "Tha has murder in thy heart."

Sam smiled gently.

"Tha's ruddy right, I have," he said. "Come on, Sammywell, put up thy dukes and stand up like a Yorkshireman."

"But I don't like brawling, Sam."

"Well, I'll sweeten ye up to it, then, Sammywell, ma lad. There!"

And Sam popped a left on one side of Sammywell's nose.

"And there!"

And he popped a right on the other side.

"Well," Sammywell said, outraged. "The Good Book says if ye're slapped on one cheek, turn the other. But it gives no instructions what to do if that gets slapped. However, I suppose that means a chap's got to use his own judgment. So—there!"

And he banged a beautiful and righteous left smack in the middle of Sam's nose.

"Ow," said Sam. "Here I come!"

Then, with fists flailing, the two went at each other in as strange a fight as you could wish to see. For, both being Sam Small, they were evenly matched as never were any two men before in prize ring history. Each had the same strength and each mind worked exactly alike. If Sam swung with the right, Sammywell blocked with his left. It was like boxing before a mirror. So on and on it went, with neither gaining an advantage, and both becoming more and more tired.

Then Sam got an inspiration.

"Thing to do next time he leads," he said to himself, "is not

to block, but to take it and just let him have one with everything I've got."

And at exactly that second Sammywell was thinking exactly the same thing.

The result was, they both swung, neither blocked, and then for each there was nothing but a blinding flash, a crack, and an interstellar polka-dot display.

Suddenly Sam felt his spirit lifting. Below him he could see the two bodies lying, unconscious. And beside him was another soaring spirit.

"Ooah, by gum," Sam moaned. "So now there's four on us."

"No, Sam," said Sammywell gently. "Look."

As they watched, the two bodies below slowly drifted together and began to merge.

"Now," Sammywell said. "Come, Sam. We've both got to fit in there."

So they floated down and began to squeeze and wriggle themselves into the body. And then Sam heard voices.

"Poor owd Sam," said someone. "He must ha' bumped into the lamp post."

Sam wanted to tell them that it had been a fight, but the words wouldn't come out. And in what seemed to be a sort of flash past of time, he was in the cottage and Mully was bending over him.

"Eigh, Sam," she moaned. "I' trouble again."

"Nay, Mully," he said, thickly. "I'm not drunk."

She bent near him.

"Neither tha is," she agreed.

Sam looked into her eyes.

"I killed him," he said.

"Who?"

"Sammywell!"

"Sammywell? Sammywell who?"

Sam thought this over and began to smile.

Women—they were the wonderful ones. They knew what part of a man's life to pretend to forget.

Sam felt a rush of warmth and love for Mully—plump Mully who was now bathing his head with a cool damp towel.

"Dosta forgive me, Mully?"

"Eigh, Sam Small," she sighed. "I been forgiving thee so many years I wouldn't know how to get out o' the habit now."

"Mully," said Sam, "I'm off to treat thee nicer. For one thing, I weren't happy away at Blackpool, and for another, well—after I killed Sammywell tonight, we sort of amalgamated. A merger, as ye might say. So now I've got him inside me, too, and he's the

good side of me—and from now on I'm off to let my good side come to the front."

"Hush," Mully said. "If ye do ye'll be sort of anatomically twisted."

"And I'm never going down to *The Spread Eagle* any more. I'm bahn to stay home every evening and read to thee while tha knits."

"Heaven forbid," Mully said. "I'd never have a moment's peace then. Eigh, I like ye just as ye are, Sam, ye old scallywag."

"Dosta, Mully? But I'm determined—fro' now on I'm off to be more like Sammywell; he's really ma better half."

"Nay, tha's got nobbut one better half," Mully said. "And that's me. Upsydaisy. Up ye come to bed."

★*Another amusing story of these delightful Yorkshire folk next month. "Sam Small and the Polkingthorpe Giant," by ERIC KNIGHT, in your JULY ARGOSY*

* * *

ALL IN A GARDEN GREEN

Adam and Eve are met again,
Bone to its white rib-bone:
The dry land, thirsty, drinks up the rain
And young shoots sprout from the stone.

The maiden watches the unicorn
Beneath the apple tree,
And the lioness suckles the lamb new-born
And the dolphins dance on the sea.

The devils chatter and leap for rage,
The desert is garden-green:
For my love has loosed my heart from its cage
And kissed it and made it clean.

The salmon swims with the hungry shark,
The eagle nests with the dove,
The wrinkles run from the oaktree bark,
And I am in love.

DONALD WATT

NIGHT DRIVE

"It wasn't discreet, Mrs. Haley," said the voice softly, "to mention you would be travelling alone"

by WILL F. JENKINS

MADGE was ready to leave the house and in the act of turning out the lights when the telephone rang. She picked it up, and it was Mr. Tabor from the village. He sounded as if he had a bad cold, although Madge hardly knew him well enough to identify his voice anyway. He said apologetically that he'd heard that Madge—he called her Mrs. Haley, of course—was driving over to Deansbury tonight. It was an imposition for him to ask, but it would be a great favour if she could take a passenger with her. His niece, Eunice, had been paying him one of her rare visits and wanted to go there to get the night train to London.

Madge felt uncomfortable. When anyone in the village mentioned Deansbury and the Deansbury Road, one felt uncomfortable these days. But to hear Mr. Tabor say it was even more disturbing.

"I was just about to leave," Madge said, "but if she can be ready fairly soon, I'll be delighted to take her along."

"She's ready now, Mrs. Haley," Mr. Tabor said faintly, as if from far away. "She'll be waiting by the gate. I have to go out, so I'll thank you now on her behalf."

He rang off, and Madge turned off the lights and went out to the car, still feeling uneasy. No woman liked to be reminded of what had happened to Mr. Tabor's wife. She'd been murdered while driving alone on the Deansbury Road at night.

The same thing had happened to another girl, too, but that wasn't quite the same as someone you knew being murdered. Nobody in the village knew the other girl. But Madge and Mrs. Tabor were nodding acquaintances in the local market and in the High Street.

The car started briskly, and Madge guided it down the road to the first turning on the right. Through the gloom, she saw a figure waiting by the gate of Mr. Tabor's unlit house.

Madge opened the left-hand door.

"You're Eunice?" she called cheerfully. "I'm Mrs. Haley."

"It's very good of you," the girl answered in a flat voice. "I hope this doesn't put you out."

"Nonsense!" said Madge. "I'm glad to have company! Climb in. And toss your bag in the back."

The girl obeyed silently. She was a little bit angular and rather clumsy. Her hat was severely plain. She wore spectacles that seemed to Madge to be tinted, although it was hard to tell in the faint glow from the street lamp. She sat primly, her hands folded in her lap, as Madge turned and headed out of the village. Soon the houses grew farther apart. There were no more street lamps. And on either side of the road, fields stretched out and dark masses of woodland showed beyond them. The road flowed smoothly towards them as Madge settled down for the twenty mile run to Deansbury and the main line railway station.

It was really a beautiful evening; the pungent smell of bracken and the good earth that rose out of the spring dark made Madge very glad to be young and alive and driving to meet her husband tonight. And at that, she was reminded again of Mrs. Tabor. One reason why Mrs. Tabor's death had been especially horrible was because she was a bride and Mr. Tabor had been so happy and so proud of her.

"It's nice having someone with me," said Madge. "I really don't like driving at night, but my husband gets into Deansbury at ten tonight, and just misses the last country bus."

The girl was silent for a second, then said, "Yes." Madge's ear was caught again by the flat, low pitched tone of Eunice's voice; it had no human quality at all.

Eunice added, as if in apology for being curt, "But it isn't bad in the daytime."

"No," Madge agreed. She was silent for a space, then said, "How did Mr. Tabor know I was driving over?"

The girl hesitated before she answered. "I expect somebody mentioned it."

"They'd hardly—" Then Madge stopped. She realized that although she never would speak of the Deansbury Road to Mr. Tabor, for fear of hurting him, others might not feel the same. "I had the petrol and oil and tyres checked today. I probably mentioned to Bob—the garage boy—where I was going. I suppose that's the answer."

The girl said, "Probably," and sat quietly, her hands in her lap.

The road made a sharp bend and woods closed in on them. The air was chilly among the trees, and then it warmed again as the woods dropped away and they were on a clear stretch once more.

"Mrs. Haley," the girl said suddenly, "do you carry a revolver when you drive at night?"

Madge jumped a little. She laughed, although not quite with ease.

"Good heavens, no. Why?" Then she said, "But I suppose your uncle thinks women should."

She felt queer. She was going to drive along the main road on which Mrs. Tabor had been killed twelve months before. There had never been any clue as to the killer. It was just assumed that, somehow, Mrs. Tabor—who also had been on her way to meet her husband—had been persuaded to stop her car and pick up someone. The car was found later. It had been sprinkled with petrol and set on fire, and any clues it might have yielded were destroyed.

Mrs. Tabor, meanwhile, had been found bludgeoned to death. There were other details, but that was the way the local paper phrased it.

She heard herself saying with morbid interest, "How long had your uncle and—Mrs. Tabor been married?"

"About three months," the girl said. She added in the same expressionless manner, "We're near the turning, aren't we?"

"Why, yes," said Madge. She grew confused. One doesn't expect a newcomer to know such things. She didn't remember Mr. Tabor's niece ever having visited him before, and she'd assumed that she was more or less a complete stranger. As far as that went, Mr. Tabor wasn't an old resident himself. He'd come to the village about a year and a half ago to accept a rather good position. And after three months he married and brought his bride to the village.

Only three months later had Mrs. Tabor undertaken to drive to Deansbury one night, and the murder had occurred. Madge remembered clearly and uncomfortably the first time she'd seen Mr. Tabor after the murder. He looked a sick man, and he'd grown shrunken and mummy-like by then. But he didn't go away. He stayed on, living in the house in which he'd spent his honeymoon. Madge couldn't understand his doing that.

The car came to the turning. There was nothing conspicuous about it. It was just a secondary road that branched off the main highway and wound across country to the County Town. In fifteen miles you could see on it only one small hamlet and perhaps four or five farmhouses, set far back from the road. Most of its length the road cut straight through heavy woods.

Madge turned into it. The air was fragrant with the aromatic smell of pine. It was cooler, too. But one no longer had the feeling of being in open space. Above and ahead there was a narrow ribbon of sky in which stars shone brightly. The headlights

stabbed on and showed pine-tree trunks alongside, and more pine-tree trunks. There was a bare screen of underbrush at the road's edge.

The angular figure beside Madge said, "Lonely in here, isn't it?"

Madge pressed harder on the accelerator. The car picked up speed.

"One thing's certain," she said, trying to smile, "nobody could make *me* stop to pick them up on this road!"

"Mrs. Tabor—Aunt Clara, I suppose I should call her," Eunice said, "didn't pick up people, either. But that night she did."

Madge set her lips and drove on. Presently she said awkwardly, "Eunice, has Mr. Tabor ever had any idea of who—who killed Mrs. Tabor?"

Eunice said impassively, "There's always the chance that the man who did it will be caught." There was a slight pause. "Another girl was killed six months later, you remember."

Madge suddenly regretted deeply that she had not made some excuse to avoid taking Eunice. It was bad enough to be reminded of Mrs. Tabor. But to be reminded at the same time of that other battered body of an unknown girl made it worse. The police were never able to find out even so much as her name. All that was known was that she had been dead six weeks or so when her body was found by a gamekeeper.

"Your uncle," said Madge, "is staying in the village, then, in the hope of catching his wife's murderer?"

Eunice answered quickly. "The same man killed that other girl. There was a scorched road map under her body when they found it. Apparently she was driving, too. Only the killer got rid of her car. It's never been found. But obviously it was the same man. The crimes were identical."

Madge said, shocked, "But that means—"

"That the killer is still around," said the flat voice. "His name was even given to the police. But they didn't believe it for an instant. He's too well thought of."

"You—you talk as if you know who the killer is!" protested Madge.

Eunice said, almost scornfully, "Of course."

The car swept past a small field of shoulder-high weeds. Just before the woods enveloped them again, there was a sudden sweetness in the air. Honeysuckle. Then the damp, aromatic smell of pine once more.

Madge was sensitive to perfumes. Consciously or otherwise, she associated some scent with everyone she knew. All her friends, certainly.

Now she suddenly realized one of the things that made this girl Eunice seem strange. She did not use scent. Not even a scented soap.

Madge's forehead began to knit into a faint frown. Her heart started pounding oddly, as if in anticipation of something that would occur to her presently. She said uneasily, " Even if Mrs. Tabor's murderer were caught, I can see that it might be hard to convict him now. My husband's a lawyer, and he says the evidence in such cases has to be airtight."

The voice beside her said in a detached way, " There was no motive for those particular women to be killed. A jury wants to see a motive for a crime, naturally. Preferably a motive they could feel themselves."

Madge admitted uncomfortably, " My husband said something like that . . ."

She fumbled in the handbag beside her.

" You drive," said the flat voice. " I'll light your cigarette."

Madge ignored the quick impulse to decline. She knew she shouldn't take her eyes off the road when she was driving so fast. She felt a cigarette touch her lips. Then Eunice snapped a lighter. Its tiny flame rose up before Madge's face. She glanced down. The car wavered. Then the wheel resisted the skidding tyres and the car righted itself. The wheel was being held. Madge felt sheer paralysis numb every muscle in her body.

" I've got the wheel," Eunice said.

Madge remembered to puff. The cigarette was lit and the lighter withdrawn. The wheel was released.

Everything was as before. The car went swiftly between the tall tree trunks. There was the same clean smell of damp underbrush and pine. Everything seemed exactly as it had been.

But everything was very different. Madge's whole body was cold. Her heart was hammering hysterically.

In that one glance down at the flame as it was held to her cigarette, she had seen Eunice's hand closely and clearly lit. The fingernails were innocent of nail polish. Their ends were not rounded, but square, like a man's. The knuckles were like a man's. There were short black hairs on the back of the hand. Like a man's.

Eunice was a man!

A voice inside Madge's brain chattered hysterically. You aren't sure it was Mr. Tabor on the 'phone . . . he talked as if he had a cold . . . it could have been anybody. It wasn't Mr. Tabor at all! It was somebody who wanted to drive with you!

There was a light by the side of the road ahead. Numbed as

she was, Madge drove on blindly. She saw other lights, which were windows, and knew dumbly that it was the tiny hamlet between the turning and Deansbury. But she was a quarter of a mile beyond it before she realized that she could have stopped there. She could have swerved the car and crashed it against something, and people would have run out and she would have been safe.

But it was too late now. She went on driving. The muscles of her throat were constricted. The car sped through the darkness, its headlights flaring before it, and now and again a moth fluttered helplessly in their rays.

Once a pair of eyes glittered by the roadside. As the car sped past, she saw it was a cat, miles from any house, crouching in the grass at the road's edge.

"Women really should carry revolvers when they drive at night," said the voice beside her. "But perhaps they wouldn't have the nerve to use them."

Madge made an inarticulate sound. Then an idea came to her. If she could keep him talking . . .

"I doubt if I could shoot anyone," she said.

Listening to her own voice, she was astounded. It sounded quite human, almost convincing. "I couldn't imagine harming another human being."

Her passenger said quietly, "I don't know that the man who killed Mrs. Tabor and the girl who was never identified could be called human. He possibly couldn't help it. But—there used to be stories about werewolves."

"Oh, but that's nonsense! People can't turn into wolves," Madge said nervously.

"Some people turn into something," said the figure beside her. "Once in a year or once in six months they feel something stirring in their minds. Their eyes change. They glow—they're bright and restless and terribly intent. They feel an unbearable tension. They're obsessed. And they have to kill."

Madge expected to hear herself scream. But her voice went on with incredible control. "Then the psychiatrists ought to watch out for the bright-eyed people."

"Oh, but people like that are cunning," her passenger said softly. "They don't let anybody notice their eyes." The unbecomingly hatted head turned towards Madge. In the dim light from the dashboard the tinted spectacles regarded her in a wholly inhuman way.

"You see," Madge's passenger said confidentially, "I've studied about them. I wanted to understand. And it seems that there have always been such people. In olden days they killed like wolves,

and wolves were blamed. So the story of the werewolf began—the story of a person who got into a house in human form and then turned into a wild beast to kill and rend and tear his victim. It was wonderfully clever of the people who kill to start that story." The figure in the seat beside Madge seemed strangely amused.

" But I can't believe that—" Then Madge's throat clicked and she could not speak at all.

Her passenger sat quite still. The hands were folded primly. Somehow, the quiet was more menacing than any muttered threats would have been. Madge's hands and arms didn't tremble, because they felt paralysed. But the wheel rolled a little unsteadily.

" I suppose they're frightened after they've killed," her companion went on. " They would be. But they learn cunning. They never live in one place very long. They kill once or twice or even three times, and then they move away. But they behave like very nice people on the surface, and their friends are sorry to see them go. They never dare to get too prosperous, however. When they're doing well, it would be a temptation to stay on. And then they'd kill perhaps a fourth or fifth time in the same place. And that would hardly be wise. Oh, they're cunning. They have to be."

The woods thinned for a moment. Far away a single unwinking dot of light indicated an isolated farmhouse. Then the trees closed in once more, and Madge knew that from here to the very outskirts of Deansbury there would be no other light. She heard her voice say brightly, " Let's talk of something else! Why choose such a gruesome subject, Eunice?"

" Mrs. Tabor was killed somewhere along here," her passenger said softly.

Then Madge's hands began to shake. It was not a mere trembling, but an uncontrollable shake. The road was very straight here, and a long way ahead there was a light—a tiny red light. She pressed on the accelerator and found herself praying agonizedly that the man beside her in a woman's dress wouldn't notice the spot of light until she had caught up with it.

The man beside her continued quietly.

" You had your car serviced today, Mrs. Haley. You mentioned at the garage that you would be driving to meet your husband at Deansbury station. That wasn't discreet. People still talk about Mrs. Tabor's murder. The garage boy mentioned that you'd be driving the same way tonight—the same way she did. If the killer heard about it . . ."

Madge was willing now to keep him talking on any subject—even this, until she caught up with whatever was ahead.

" Oh, but I'm sure no one would think—"

"Someone would. Somebody who was obsessed, who felt unbearable tension inside. Someone who knew the time had come when he had to kill."

"Why," Madge said with effort, "why—you speak as if someone planned to—to kill me!"

The figure beside her said softly, "I wouldn't be surprised. I wouldn't be surprised at all."

Then the voice changed. "There's something on the road ahead! It looks like an accident."

The light was not moving. She overhauled it swiftly. If she could only get to where someone else was, no matter who . . . Then she knew not only what was in the road ahead but whose lights had been turned up, and she could see who it was. She recognized the red motor cycle on which Bob, the boy from the garage, dashed about the village.

It lay there, its light slanting brightly across the road. There was Bob, limping out into the glare. He had a rough bandage on one leg.

"I've got to stop," Madge said. "I know him. It's Bob, from the garage. He was the one who serviced my car today."

The figure beside her seemed to relax. A crazy, frantic hope came to Madge. The masquerading man must be armed. But wouldn't he hesitate to try to kill a man *and* a woman? A woman alone would be a certain victim. But if she could get Bob into the car, the figure that pretended to be Eunice might sit quietly and get out in Deansbury—and nothing would happen at all . . .

The brakes squealed shrilly. The car stopped. There was some spilled oil on the road, and Bob, limping, almost hopping, in the headlight rays. He came to the window beside Madge.

"Mrs. Haley!" he said with relief. "I was hoping you'd be coming along behind me, instead of having gone on ahead. I hit something in the road and skidded, and my leg's all messed up—"

He stopped. He'd seen that Madge was not alone.

She said unsteadily, "Bob, this is—Eunice. Mr. Tabor's niece. She's driving to Deansbury with me."

"Oh," said Bob.

"Get in the back seat," said Madge urgently. "You'll want a doctor. I'll rush you on to Deansbury."

Bob hesitated. "I don't know . . . I hate to leave my bike. All I need is somebody to help me get it standing up. With one gammy leg I can't do it, but I don't need much help. It's not too heavy . . ."

The quiet voice beside Madge said, "I'll help. I've got a pair of heavy gloves in my suitcase. I'll get them out and help, if you'll pull up a little so we won't block the road, Mrs. Haley."

Bob went limping back to his motor cycle to wait. Madge was buoyed by hope. She pulled ahead and over to the side of the road.

The man beside her said softly, " A little farther. Don't stop the engine, Mrs. Haley . . ." And then he turned and spoke rapidly, intensely. " Mrs. Haley, I'm John Tabor. My wife was killed near here by someone she knew. She would never have given a stranger a ride. She'd had her car serviced that day at the garage—she was worried about driving alone at night."

Madge gasped and tried to speak.

" I've been watching everyone who could be a suspect," Mr. Tabor told her. " I finally singled out Bob. I noticed him acting strangely just after—just after my wife's death, and then again six months ago. Nothing happened immediately. Only—then they found that other girl's body, and she'd been dead just six weeks. I knew then I was right, and I became sure of it as I watched. Tonight he knew you were coming. He said so. You'd have stopped for him, too ; you know him. Just as my wife did."

Madge's hands worked together.

Mr. Tabor leaned closer. " He thinks I'm a woman. I'll start back. Then he'll call to you to stop your engine and help. He's quite sure he'll have both of us for victims tonight."

" But—what shall I do ? " Madge was close to tears.

" Just drive on," John Tabor said. " That's all. I think he's going to be surprised tonight."

The angular figure went back along the road. Madge sat stiff as a doll at the wheel of the idling car.

There was no light except the narrow ribbon of stars overhead and the patch of road lighted by the motor cycle's beam. Bob was silhouetted against the lighted space. He watched the small, skirted figure as it approached him. And as Madge looked, Bob seemed to change.

He was a black shape against a lighted background. And the shape changed—very gradually—from that of a tall young man favouring an injured leg to that of an animal crouched to spring. One of the arms moved slowly, and it came back into silhouette, holding a heavy object. The hand that held it swayed it gently back and forth, making ready . . .

Then Bob spoke. " Mrs. Haley," he called, " if you'll turn off your engine and come and help too, it won't be any job at all to get the bike up and going."

Madge couldn't force an answer. Then the crouched figure began to move forwards with a swift, rolling gait. And it did not limp ! The injured leg was a trick too.

Madge let in the clutch. She never remembered driving those

last five miles in to town. It was her body that did it, taking charge while her mind was filled with a kaleidoscope of terrifying scenes. So this was the way Mrs. Tabor had been killed. She'd stopped at the garage, as Madge had done, to have her tyres and oil checked. And she'd chatted with Bob and told him where she was driving that night.

The unknown girl must have been driving through. And she'd stopped for petrol, too, and told Bob she planned to drive to Deansbury that night. After her body was found, there was still nothing for the police to go on. Mr. Tabor's talk of glittering eyes wasn't enough even to justify an investigation. It wasn't anything at all without evidence.

So Mr. Tabor could only wait patiently for that look to come into Bob's eyes again, and then find out which woman would be driving alone and drive with her.

Madge drove like the wind until the lights of Deansbury showed through the trees. Then she slowed the car and took it sedately into the town.

She stopped at the red traffic lights and parked with trembling precision by the station. Then she sat still, shaking. She couldn't speak. She couldn't tell anyone . . .

For days after that, Madge stayed at home, tense and shivering. The first time she went out she saw Mr. Tabor near the inn. He lifted his hat politely. She nodded distantly and hurried on.

And shortly after that he moved to another village.

* * *

ON THE SPOT

Franklin Roosevelt once told of a young Naval ensign whose marks in navigation had not been all that might have been desired, and who was once set the task of shooting the sun to determine the ship's position. The vessel was on a cruise, and was somewhere west of Penzance.

After a while the ensign delivered to the captain the result of his calculations.

Shortly afterwards, the captain sent for the ensign. "Young man," said the officer, "remove your cap. We are now upon a hallowed spot."

"Beg your pardon, Captain?" queried the young man, mystified.

"Yes, sir," said the captain. "If you have calculated accurately we are now right in the middle of Westminster Abbey."

LUNCH, CRICKET AND THESPIA

"Only the British," she said, "could think up such things!"

by COLIN BULLARD

AS I was entering my club the other day, I was eagerly greeted by a charming Grecian acquaintance of mine. She exclaimed, with every graduation of appeal in her expressive dark eyes, "Henry, dear Henry! I am so pleased to see you. I want your help so very much."

"Why, of course, Thespia," I said. "Come and have some lunch with me."

"It is cricket!" she announced dolefully, when we were seated together and had ordered, at her request, a repast sufficiently exotic to cause the waiter to regard me with even greater melancholy than usual.

"Cricket!" I exclaimed with some astonishment.

She smiled secretly and sighed.

"He is so sweet, Henry, but his heart is so full of cricket that I have no room! I must know about cricket, and you must tell me. It is an occupation peculiar to the British and I am ignorant of what is done in its performance or of how the sport is enjoyed."

"I myself don't understand how it is enjoyed," I said.

"Do not place the cart to the nose of the horse, Henry!" she complained. "Tell me of cricket from the beginning."

I cleared my throat.

"Cricket is a game played by eleven men on each side. One side is called the fielders and they stand—well—out in the field—and—they field the balls."

"They field the balls," she interrupted eagerly. "That is a new word—field—a verb. What do they do to the balls by this? Where do the balls come from?"

"Well, one of the fielders is a bowler."

"A bowler? What is that? I have thought always the bowler is a hat."

"It is a hat—but not in cricket. In cricket it's the man who bowls the ball to the batsman."

"He bowls. What is that? A bowl is a dish, is it not?"

"It's a sort of throw with a stiff arm."

"Indeed! And the bat-man is also in the field?"

"Well, he is actually on the field of course, but he is not fielding, as we say. He is on the other side which is batting."

"But the bowler is fielding—yes—he throws with a stiff arm his ball at the bat-man. Is that so? My friend, I am so happy. I learn so quickly the terms of this sport. You are so clever to explain. But I have not yet a picture in my mind of what proceeds."

This did not surprise me. I took a long pull at my tankard, while she watched the waiter replenish her glass with a pleasant white wine. It gave me time to consider my next words, which I spoke slowly.

"The captain of the fielding side places his men about the field in positions where he thinks the batsman will hit the ball."

"And what is that for, Henry dear?"

I gave her the nearest approach to a cold glance which I could muster and continued: "The batsman then tries to hit the ball to places where there are no fielders."

"He hits the ball which the bowler has thrown at him."

I glared testily, but she went on, "Can the bowler throw at whoever he selects of the opposing party, Henry dear?"

"Listen, Thespia. He doesn't throw. He bowls. And there are only two batsmen. The others are watching the game from the pavilion."

"But Henry! That is not the sport! To watch while only two comrades of one's party engage eleven of the opponents. I do not like it at all. If one plays at a game, let all who oppose engage together. Let—"

"Listen, won't you let me go on? You have not heard half of the game yet. How can you criticise?"

Thespia pouted, then smiled.

"All right. You proceed, Henry. You were saying the bowler only had two men to throw at—bowl at, I mean. Oh! Henry! I will not say it again and make you cross, I promise."

I merely grunted. "Right. You are clear now that the bowler does not throw? He bowls."

"Yes, Henry. How many balls are there to play with? And does the bat-man know from which of the fielders he is to be bowled?"

I sat back and ran my fingers through my hair, exasperated.

"He isn't a batman," I said carefully, "That is an officer's soldier servant. This chap is a batsman."

"Ah, the British! He plays with one bat, so it is bats, yes?"

I just looked at her. Suddenly her lips parted in a dazzling smile and she rested her hand on mine for a fraction of a second. "I am diverting with the red herring, yes? But there, forgive me, Henry, and tell me more about cricket. How is the victor decided?"

"Thespia!" I exclaimed rather crossly, "Will you let me get on, instead of asking thousands of questions?"

"Yes, Henry," she said meekly, but added brightly, "I like you when you are cross! Would you beat me if you were very cross—I mean, if I was your wife?"

"No." I said rudely. "I should probably shoot myself."

"But that would be most gallant, Henry!"

I lifted an eyebrow at the waiter, who was moving to replenish her glass and he returned the wine to the ice bucket.

"*Aux moutons!*" I exclaimed foolhardily.

"*Aux moutons!*" she echoed immediately, with an accent so lyrically perfect that my own was shown up as nothing less than execrable.

I plunged back to the cricket field. "There is only one bowler and he bowls eight balls in—"

"Eight balls!" she exclaimed. "But how does the batsman defend himself?"

"They are not bowled all at once, Thespia. How could they be?"

"I don't know!" she gurgled. "You are telling me!"

"Well, he only bowls one at a time of course."

"And he holds the others, as in tennis. I understand. But eight! Four to each hand it must be."

For the first time I looked into her puzzled face, and laughed. She immediately became vexed and demanded why she was funny. Was her hat so peculiar? Or did I laugh unkindly because she didn't understand so imbecile a game as cricket? If I laughed, she would go, truly she would!

"But you laughed at me just now!" I exclaimed.

"Ah! And if I cry, will you cry? And if I dance, will you dance? And . . ."

"Certainly!" I cried. "Of course I'll dance."

"Oh, Henry!" she said, with sudden radiance, "You are so sweet to dance with me. Tell me then, how he holds the balls!"

"Thespia! He doesn't. I didn't say he held eight balls together. He bowls eight times. There is only one ball. He bowls it. The batsman hits it. The fielder stops it, and then throws it back."

"But now he throws! Why does he not bowl?"

"Because he isn't the bowler! He throws it back. The bowler bowls again. That happens eight times. Then it's 'over.' The—" I stopped short. I knew what was coming.

Thespia wrung her slender hands and wailed, "But Henry, I am going crazy! It is over. Who has won? What of those in the pavilion who have come to the field to play and have had no game?"

I sighed.

"I am sorry Thespia. All these words seem to mean something different in cricket. The eight balls are called an 'over.' When they have been bowled everybody changes over."

"The batters to the field? But—"

"No. The fielders cross to the opposite side—to the opposite side of the field. You see the bowling is from the other end now."

Thespia sipped her coffee. Then she put her cup down and regarded me steadily. "I am green if I am not a cabbage! Is that so, Henry? You are the most horrid man. How should I know before that you were teasing? But now I know. I am having the lunch without a thank you. I will go. I hate you very much. You shall pull some other legs. Mine, they have the bells already fixed!"

Involuntarily I glanced down at her slender ankles, which she immediately tucked under her chair, giving me a look which can only be described as an inaudible snort.

She picked up her bag and gloves and half rose. I seized her arm and drew her back into her chair. She remained as rigid as a poker and stared at me stonily.

"Listen, Thespia," I said.

"Let me go. I shall make the scream."

"I swear I am not teasing. It is this infernal game. I certainly am a fool but—"

"You are the big big fool! Let me go!" Only the word she used wasn't "big."

"Thespia. For Heaven's sake sit down. Where on earth did you learn that word? You can't say things like that! It's—it's—well, it's bad language. Thespia, my dear. Please listen. Honestly I'm trying to tell you about cricket."

She relaxed and I mopped my brow.

"You promise how you are trying, Henry?"

"I promise how I am."

Her teeth suddenly flashed.

"Was it a good swear I made to you, Henry?"

"You made a wonderful swear. But you mustn't, you know. It is not a word you should use."

"I like it," she said.

There was no answering her glance of finality and I hastily swerved back to our national game.

"I think I'd better explain all the words which are used and have a special meaning," I suggested. She agreed demurely, but continued, with unabated zest, to interrupt and criticise and create inconsequent diversions.

She was highly indignant to think that a team sometimes retired, and when she heard of a side being put in again, she exclaimed,

"But it is the most incomprehensible game! Only the British could think up such things! To play a game to make the runs. To cease to make as many as possible. What for? To make a game of it you say. Was it not a game before? To encourage the opponents to make more runs than oneself and so be victorious!—Ah, but Henry! I may not understand the cricket but I know how to play. I am so grateful, Henry dear. I know of the pitch and the bails on the stumps and the umpires who observe. And wickets in the hand—"

At this juncture I saw young Tony Hayworth making eagerly for our table. He was staring idiotically at Thespia's back and blundered into chairs and waiters as he came. After seeing Thespia look at him, one could not really blame him.

"I thought we'd go along and watch the match," he said.

"But how lovely!" cried Thespia, powdering her small aquiline nose.

He refused coffee, saying it was late already. She rose and took his arm. As they moved away, I heard her say:

"And who will be throwing with a stiff arm the ball at the creases of the batters this afternoon, Tony darling?"

"Batsmen, sweet!" said Tony. "Not batters. Batter's a sort of pudding!"

* * *

ENCUIRE WITHIN

JAMES WILLIAMS, PARISH CLERK, SAXTONE, TOWN CRYER, and BELLMAN—makes and sells all sorts of haberdasheries, groceries, &c. likewise hair and wigs drest and cut, on the shortest notice.

N.B.—I keeps an evening school, where I teach at reasonable rates, reading, writing and singing.

N.B.—I play the Hooboy occasionally, if wanted.

N.B.—My shop is next door, where I bleed, draw teeth, and shoo horses, with the greatest skill.

N.B.—Children taught to dance, if agreeable, at 6d. week, by me J. Williams, who buy and sell old iron, and coals—shoes cleaned and mended.

N.B.—A Hat and pair of stockens to be cudgelled for, the best in 5, on Shrof Tuesday. For particulars encuire within, or at the horse shoo and bell, near the church, on tother side of the way.

N.B.—Look over the door for the sight of the three pidgeons.

N.B.—I sell good Ayle, and sometimes Cyder—Lodgins for single men.

Old Lancashire Shop-Sign

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

What a strange thing is man! and what a stranger is woman!

LORD BYRON

Our coach was full, but we dropt two at Oxford; and to my great delight we left the other filthy wretch at Birmingham at 6 in the morning. He had been eating *prawns* all night, and flinging the skins at the bottom of the coach.

THOMAS CREEVEY, *in a letter to Miss Ord, September*, 1828

Seen In The Park

The City Financier
walks in the gardens,
stiffly, because of
his pride and his burdens.

The daisies, looking
up, observe
only a self-
respecting curve.

The thrushes only
see a flat
table-land
of shiny hat.

He looks importantly
about him,
while all the spring
goes on without him.

HUMBERT WOLFE, 1885-1940

Miss Chalmers Meets Seven Superior Bishops

I begin to like bishops very much. I regard them with the eye of a naturalist as a new species before unknown to me. Deans wear aprons and single-breasted coats, the same as bishops, but they have not the strangely shaped wigs nor the three-cornered hats which distinguish the latter. There were very nice bishops tonight. Winchester was at Sir T. Acland's the other night, also

Lichfield and Coventry. I saw a young bishop at St. James's one day, but Bath and Wells who was at the Anti-Slavery meeting is the ugliest person of the species I have seen. Winchester is ten years younger and handsomer than his brother Chester and is a richer and superior bishop and wears a badge; but Chester is very agreeable and they are both good men. The Bishop of London is very handsome.

Diary of ANNE CHALMERS, *aged* 17, *May* 12, 1830

Three Men And A Bride

Three strange men came to the Inn.
One was a black man, pocked and thin,
one was brown with a silver knife,
and one brought with him a beautiful wife.

That lovely woman had hair as pale
as French champagne or finest ale,
that lovely woman was long and slim
as a young white birch or a maple limb.

Her face was like cream, her mouth was a rose,
what language she spoke nobody knows,
but sometimes she'd scream like a cockatoo
and swear wonderful oaths that nobody knew.

Her great silk skirts like a silver bell
down to her little bronze slippers fell,
and her low-cut gown showed a dove on its nest
in blue tattooing across her breast.

Nobody learned the lady's name,
nor the marvellous land from which they came,
but still they tell through the countryside
the tale of those men and that beautiful bride.

ELIZABETH COATSWORTH

Meeting In The Mall

Mr. Vernon told me he had his pocket picked in the Mall of a guiny and halfe. He came towards a gentlewoman who satt on the sideboard. Just as he came to her, she fell downe backwards as if she had been sicke. He helps her up, she picks his pockett.

J. WOTTON, *in a letter*, March, 1701

All In Vain

With much ado, the ways being very bad, got to Baldwick. There lay, and had a good supper by myself. The landlady being a pretty woman, but I durst not take notice of her, her husband being there.

SAMUEL PEPYS, *Diary*, August 6th, 1661

Surprising Encounter At A Railway Station

He was an old man, but as stout as my English fellow-traveller. He wore a yellow sarong, and yellow is the royal colour. But his tunic was the old scarlet affair, with yellow facings, of an English infantryman. Instead of the hat of a Mohammedan, he wore a white regimental helmet. He had a blue sash. On his breast were displayed a number of ornate decorations, brass regimental badges, and medals won by other people in the past for the most diverse things—for swimming at Plymouth and running at Stamford Bridge. And central on his breast, hanging by a cord, was a conspicuous red reflector from the rear lamp of a bicycle.

H. M. TOMLINSON,
describing a rajah in Ceylon, in Gifts of Fortune

Mr. Nash Meets Lucy For The Last Time

Lawsamassy, for heaven's sake!
Have you never heard of Lucy Lake?
Lucy is fluffy and fair and cosy,
Lucy is like a budding posy.
Lucy speaks with a tiny lisp,
Lucy's mind is a will-o'-the-wisp.
Lucy is just as meek as a mouse,
Lucy lives in a darling house,
With a darling garden and darling fence,
And a darling faith in the future tense.
A load of hay, or a crescent moon,
And she knows that things will be better soon.
Lucy resigns herself to sorrow
In building character for tomorrow.
Lucy tells us to carry on,
It's always darkest before the dawn.
A visit to Lucy's bucks you up,
Helps you swallow the bitterest cup.
Lucy Lake is meek as a mouse.
Let's go over to Lucy's house,
And let's lynch Lucy!

OGDEN NASH, *The Face Is Familiar*

★*Until recently the Scolt Lapps, a small tribal race which migrated to the Arctic wastes from the high table land of Tibet, were little known to the world, though report of their remarkable store of legends had come south with hardy collectors of folk lore.*

But the Scolts are a taciturn people, and until they could be persuaded to accept the young M. Crottet as one of themselves—he lived for some years as a Scolt Lapp, in the family of one of their storytellers—little of their amazing folk lore was ever divulged to the outside world. Then, alarmed by the rumours of war, and a possible scattering of the tribe, they entrusted M. Crottet with the task of preserving the legends of their race.

And he has recorded them faithfully—with a spontaneous sympathy and a natural magic that reflects the urbane, unsophisticated outlook of a little known race living in a far off frozen world.

ANSWER OF THE GREAT REINDEER

by ROBERT CROTTET

"TELL me all you know of love," said Tania to the great reindeer that Nature herself had moulded out of granite rock. "For thousands of years you have had nothing to do but think."

Tania knew well that such age gives experience and wisdom and; most of all, the obligation to answer a young girl's questions.

Even as a child, Tania would come and ask him for advice. She had grown up under the protection of his shadow. But granite reindeer, even those as old as the world, do not really answer small girls' questions. Rather is it that small girls make them give all the answers which they like to hear. The only obligation for granite reindeer, is to approve and be the helpful confidants of all those important events that take place in a young girl's life.

Tania asked herself hundreds of questions and she answered them all, thanks to her friend ! But today, she too remained silent. Today, she had asked a question and did not know the answer.

Now, perhaps for the first time, she wished that the reindeer could speak.

Often, she imagined, he turned his head in her direction and looked at her.

" Tell me all about love."

No ! He did not look at her, but gazed far out at the ocean.

" Ships always look sad," she thought. " They are so beautiful ; one would like to love them. But there is no time. They always fade away. They are like the clouds that travel on the ocean of Heaven. It is never the same ones which return."

She leaned against the reindeer and passed her arm round his neck of stone.

" When the priest comes to the village," she said in a low voice, " he will make Pjetr and me husband and wife. There will be many people gathered in rejoicing, and they will eat and drink the whole day long. And in the night he will take me into his bed. I love him as much as a brother, but not more." A sad smile crept over her face.

" Is that all you've found for an answer ? If this is love, I do not understand why people speak of it in such a mysterious voice. Is it enough for him to be a man and me a woman, to make us both happy under the same roof ?

" Look ! The sun is tired. He is resting on the horizon, giving back to the sea her colours of the night. Do you see those great birds flying towards the shore ? For me too, it is time to go home."

But it is not good for a girl whose heart is full of dreams, to go home when there is so much longing in the arctic summer night.

A bird grazed her with its wings. She told it to go home, for she alone had the right to watch, while the world was still slumbering.

But, that night, there were other beings who slept not. From beyond the rocks their plaintive voices resounded like some forlorn echo from a world lost long ago.

For her, it was not the wolves ; it was the Forest itself that sang. In his voice were joy and pain, regret and reproach, love and death. The wolves are but interpreters of the Forest.

But sometimes it is neither for the trees nor for the earth, that the wolves sing. They lift their heads and proclaim that somewhere in the planetary wastes a star is born or a world is about to die.

Yes, Tania knew what the wolves were saying. And so she was surprised to hear a voice that neither sang nor cried for the sake of others. That voice spoke only for itself and Tania understood that it was calling for help.

" Farewell," she said to the reindeer. " Whoever sings in such a way must know the answer to the question I asked you tonight."

Agile as a cat, Tania jumped from one rock to another ; in no time she had covered the distance which separated her from the forest.

Well did she know that the priest had told her that to love the

body for its beauty, is to love the casket instead of the precious stone within. But all the priests in the world could not have found a remedy for the strange and delightful ache that had taken possession of her. And those eyes which looked at her caused her a wondrous pain, such as she had never known before.

He had fallen down among the little birch trees at the edge of the forest. The coat on which he lay scarcely protected him from the rock, but his head rested on the roots of a young tree.

From their hiding place, the wolves had seen a hollow in the rock snatch hold of his leg, and they had joined their voices to his call.

Tania could not open her mouth or make a single movement.

"Are you frightened of me?" he asked.

Tania recovered from her shock, only to turn her back on the young man and flee away into the forest. But she soon realized that if she did not help him, he would die and be eaten by the wolves.

But how was she to return to him without looking foolish?

A brook, hurrying along among the rocks, came to her rescue.

She bent over, and making a cup out of her hands, took some water to the young man. She knelt beside him, putting her hands to his mouth. He drank it eagerly, to the last drop, and Tania felt his burning lips on the palm of her hand. In the distance the wolves were quiet. Above the calm expanse of the ocean, the sun rose slowly.

"I am tired and aching," said the stranger.

"There is the house where I live with my father and mother."

She blushed and felt that her tongue was of wood.

He smiled, as though forgetting his pain.

"Your tongue is like my leg," he said. "It refuses to move. I'll talk for you and you'll walk for me."

He tried to get up and passed his arm round her waist.

Tania held herself straight; she was strong and flexible, like a young birch tree. She walked with caution, so that the injured leg, hanging close to her, would not be hurt by the stones, or the roots that were like the swollen veins of the earth.

He let her lead him and spoke slowly, like a child remembering.

"When I was a very little boy . . ."

So melodious was his voice, that even the trees ceased to whisper. The leaves no longer trembled in the caressing breeze which is the secret breath of the forest. Even the sensitive bark that betrays the uneasiness of the sap, hesitated for a while, to trouble the silence with its crackling.

There was nothing very extraordinary in what he was saying; but Tania was so afraid that he would stop speaking, that she grew

impatient with the movements of her own body, lest they should disturb him. Did it matter what he was saying ? She was listening only to his voice. His voice was like a deep warm river ; it was as though a gentle flow deliciously entered her veins and mingled with her blood.

Perhaps, long ago, her mother had talked to her in just such a way, to make her sleep. Or it may have been someone else ? From what mysterious world had she received the message that one day an invisible breeze would cross her path and would, with overflowing tenderness, make her blood sing in her veins ?

No. It was not her mother. It was an angel who had bent over her and told her not to be frightened if, one day, another life joined her life and another body joined hers.

But what was the matter, suddenly, with the trees along her path ? Why did they seem to embrace her with their branches ? Why was the sky and the earth so happy, so vast, so eager ?

Suddenly she noticed that his voice was tired and beginning to falter. She could not repress a start of astonishment, when a word, heavy with meaning, came to her ears ; that same word makes old people tremble and it brings tears to the eyes of the children.

" Death has passed through the village where I lived," said the stranger. " One morning it knocked at the door of our house. 'Anyone asking for hospitality will not be turned away,' said my father.

" He lay down on his bed, and his shadow, instead of stretching beside him like a watchful guardian, lay down on top of him. It wrapped him in such an intimate embrace, that soon his whole body took on the colour of his shadow. My mother followed his example. Then, many people did the same. It was said that a deadly disease had taken hold of our village.

" I lay stretched before the fire ; I was watching my shadow. But it was asleep at my side and my body did not change its colour, so I understood that death had forgotten me. I rose to my feet and left behind me for ever the village of my childhood.

" And now," he turned towards Tania and looked into her eyes : " You must be afraid of me now ; I have come to you from the land of death."

Tania smiled and her lips were moist in the morning sun :

" I do not fear death, if it has sent you to me."

" But death is terrible ! "

" There is no longer any life, any death for us, since we have found each other," she answered.

Life . . . Birth . . . Death. . . . What did they matter ? They were only milestones on a very long road. And far away, right

at the end, there stood eternally the miraculous sun of love.

They had both entered a beautiful new country, which they had borne within themselves. It was as though a precious fruit had suddenly ripened at the moment of their encounter. Inside them, their hearts were alight, like two candles touched by an invisible flame.

He had forgotten his broken leg; he felt nothing but an almost painful happiness.

"I can no longer live or die without you," said Tania, in a low whisper.

"If our lips met," he said, "do you think they could ever part again?"

In the distance, a dog barked.

When a child came into the world, or when an old man or woman was about to die, people went to fetch the wise woman. But usually she was so keen to help, that she came of her own accord, out of the depths of the forest.

Running beside her hut was a small stream, which told her the names of those who could not do without her help in this world.

"Why do you sing so sadly tonight?" asked the wise woman. Brushing aside the fish that leapt out of the water to kiss her cheeks, she bent down over the stream, listening.

"Tania?" she exclaimed. "But she is the most sensible girl in the country. What evil could have come to her . . . unless it is that of love? But she does not need my advice, for her heart is more sweetly fragrant than the sap of the pine trees in spring. It would tell her better than I the words that quench the amorous thirst of a lover."

One fish, more ardent than the rest, wriggled between the wise woman's fingers and, for a moment, pressed its damp lips to her mouth.

"If the kisses of her lover are as cold as yours," she said, wiping her lips, "I do not envy her; but thank you for your good intentions, little fish."

A breath of wind passed between the branches, and the wise woman, lifting her eyes, saw the birch leaves dancing nervously above her head. Her ears, which could even hear the heart-beats of a bird, brought her a rather unpleasant sound. She frowned and said:

"Even the birch trees are anxious about Tania. There is a restless melancholy in their rustle. Love is a sad and captive bird when it dwells in but one heart; then no one listens to the flapping of its wings. But, if it dwells in two hearts at once, it flies towards Heaven and visits the angels."

She paused, dropping her head into her hands ; then murmured : " She is much too lovable. . . . Her love is certainly returned. But; if the right bird has flown to her heart, why is there so much weariness in the voices round me ?

" Unless . . . yes . . . unless the bird has too good a memory ? After its conversation with Heaven, it is no longer at ease on earth ; it dreams now of going to live for ever with the angels."

She hesitated no longer.

" We can no longer call our home our own," said Tania's father, when the wise woman burst into the hut. " Not only has he turned us out of our own beds, but he is stealing our daughter, who is to be married to Pjetr in three weeks' time. Can't you find a remedy to cure his wretched leg and rid us of him ? "

"Just to look at him," sobbed the mother, " makes you feel he does not belong to our world. They say he has come to us straight from the land of death."

" I should like to see this monster," said the wise woman.

" My daughter broods over him," said the father, " as the snow hen broods over her egg, which she cannot leave alone for one minute."

" If only you'd take him away," said the mother, amidst her sobs, " I promise you never again to tell people that, between certain wise women and a witch, the difference is only an illusion."

"And I," said the father, " I'll pray for your soul, even if I know in advance that it is damned."

" I have seen the sun embrace the buds of the trees in spring, but your eyes would make the stones bud, just by looking at them," said the wise woman peering in from the doorway.

" Sh-shh ! " said Tania. " He is asleep."

" He is very handsome," said the wise woman.

The sight of great happiness always made her a little sad, for true love can only be eternal, and eternity and this life are not always the best of friends.

" Lovers often speak of death," thought the wise woman. " For them, death is a strangely sweet elixir that flows to their lips from a land beyond this one. For those who are not frightened of love, it is so easy to die."

The wise woman cast her eyes from one to the other, then rested them on the young man.

" They are made for each other, as the fish is made for the stream in which it swims, but God protects the little fishes ! "

The young man awoke. " Show me your wounded leg. But it

is almost healed," she cried, looking at the stranger, who cunningly assumed an air of complete innocence. "Is it true, what they say?" asked the wise woman.

"What do they say?"

"That the priest will come to the village and . . ."

"And marry me to Pjetr whom I love not more than a brother," cried Tania.

"And how many days separate us from this event?" asked the wise woman.

"Nineteen!"

"Surely that is time enough for me to find a remedy," said the wise woman.

"But isn't it better not to hurry things," said Tania, looking down at the injured leg.

Now the wise woman herself assumed an air of complete innocence.

"Certain remedies, far from hurrying the cure, delay it."

"Well," said the father.

"Well," sighed the wise woman. "Certain legs refuse to be healed, in spite of all my efforts, and I fear that this poor boy has one just like that."

"If he does not leave the house within two weeks, I'll throw him out, even if I have to ask my wife for help," cried the father.

"When you think of the punishment Heaven reserves for those who break the laws of hospitality . . ." pronounced the wise woman.

"You alone can help us," said the old man.

"I'll do my best."

Favouring them with a deep and solemn curtsey, the wise woman moved majestically towards the door.

Alone in the forest, she felt sad again.

"Why are there so many wolves around those who love each other?" she thought.

There was one she really must change into a sheep, before it was too late.

Tania's betrothed was surprised to see the wise woman arrive, but he offered her a cup of coffee which she accepted, in view of the struggle which she knew lay ahead.

"Good coffee," she said. "The old blood in my veins feels quite young now. But rather than your coffee, it is the thought of your courage that makes my heart beat more quickly. And when I think of the anguish you had to go through, before deciding to . . ."

"To what?"

"To marry a woman like Tania," said the wise woman, with a trembling voice.

"She has nothing lacking," said the betrothed.

"It is not what she lacks that worries me. Have you thought that it is not only her whom you are marrying?"

"I have no intention of marrying her parents, if that is what you mean."

"Then they will marry you. Poor Pjetr. Do you know what they are saying in the village?"

"That her parents are not very agreeable," answered Pjetr. "But who is, nowadays? And they own the nicest herd of reindeer in the country."

"Yes. That's one of the reasons why they want you to marry them. They have no one to look after the beasts and the father is too old and too busy beating his relations to bring any wood from the forest. As for her mother, do you know who walks arm in arm with her, when both the moon and the sun are not watching? The devil, my poor boy! And guess what your future mother-in-law says to the devil:

"'You may well spring fresh and warm out of hell; but there is nothing you can teach me. You don't even know half of what I know.' But that's not all. Do you know who else there is?"

"He'll go, once his leg is healed," cried Pjetr.

The wise woman smiled: "It is easier to catch a fox with a piece of string than to mend a leg which refuses to heal."

Pjetr began to lose patience: "Have you seen him? Is it true that Tania never leaves him alone?"

"I haven't seen them kiss," answered the wise woman, "but, if eyes could kiss . . ."

She looked at Pjetr. "When you are in love, you sometimes kiss even more warmly without touching each other. And you, Pjetr, do you know what love is?"

"I know you are going to make a long speech. Have another cup of coffee."

"Pjetr," said the wise woman, grasping his hands, "can you eat, can you breathe, can you live, when she is not with you? Can you look at the stars without crying with joy? Listen to the wind without hearing her voice? Bend over the pool without seeing her image? Do you kiss the moss, the sun, the trees? And when there is nothing left to kiss, do you kiss your own hand, thinking it is hers?"

She paused for breath. Pjetr was red in the face from suppressed laughter. At last, it exploded. When he had calmed down a little, he said, "Heaven preserve me from such a disease."

Suddenly he became serious. " Do you think Tania is suffering from it ? "

" Do I think ! " cried the old woman.

" Thank you ; you have saved me from a great evil. I'll go at once to Masha who promised to marry me in case Tania wasn't suitable. . . ."

The wise woman found it unnecessary to accept a third cup of coffee.

When you are in love, everything is beautiful. When you are alone, you long for things that never fade away. You seek for companions among those who inhabit the farthest shores, and come to you from afar, covered with eternity. The room in which you live is too small, so you go and dream beside the sea, gazing at a ship dying behind the horizon. Or else you lie down in the forest under the trees which bring to you the lonely message of the wind.

But when you are in love, the smallest room is vast enough to contain all your dreams. What is the infinity of the ocean compared with those eyes which open, for you, the door into the land of the angels ? Why give your lips to the kiss of the wind or the sun, when that mouth which surrenders to yours lets you drink at the very source of eternity ?

So they both lived, ignoring the days which passed by like hours.

As the bear of the forest never tires of eating the wild honey, so they never tired of drinking in the sun which slept in each other's eyes.

Like children blinded by too much light, they travelled in a land that only lovers know. And if sometimes their hands pressed a little more tightly, it was only because a common friend had passed along one of the roads of this invisible and familiar world in which they both felt so happily secure.

They did not need to ask a star to shine over their love like a watchlight in the confines of the heavens.

The stars pass by and they are as fragile as the lives of men. But, if the sun is the mortal star, shining over a world that passes away, the One who shines from an invisible sky belongs to a world that does not pass away. To Him they had confided their love.

One day when she had come back from the forest, he looked at her with surprise : " Is it the wise woman who has set your eyes on fire ? " he asked.

" He who has set my eyes on fire is more powerful than all the wise women in the world," she answered. " Do you know the smell of the moss ? It wanders under the trees, caressing the roots and then it enters into you, filling your mouth and your nostrils. It is warm, full of the breath of the forest, and you feel a little

drowsy as if you had tasted earth and sun at the same time. And then, you fall down upon the moss and you turn your face towards the sun, forcing it to close your eyes.

" Before going to sleep, I told the trees that I loved you. The wind, that carries so many messages, sad and joyful, passed near my lips and returned to you.

" I dreamt that we were both facing a door. ' Push ! ' you said. There was such tenderness in your voice that my breast felt too small to contain so much love, and the door seemed so heavy that I did not dare to touch it. Suddenly it started to move and slowly opened by itself."

She stopped and, looking gravely at him, said : " When you take me in your arms, the most beautiful visions that we give each other are like the poor Northern Lights compared to the sun that shone upon the other side of the door. But to describe Him, I must have other lips, other words. Only an inhabitant from the land beyond would know the language that no ear has ever heard. And yet I, too, for just one instant, had passed the door. I too . . ."

She hesitated, then put her hand on his arm.

" Listen," she said. " When I kiss your lips I know that it is really your heart that my mouth has touched, though I have never seen your heart. And I want nothing more. I have found everything I was seeking, and I know that I shall never need anything else."

She smiled : " What does the number of years we spend together matter, when our hearts are filled with joy and we look into each other's eyes ? "

But another day, when she came back from the forest, Tania found her parents in joyful excitement.

" He has gone," said the father.

" You should have seen how well he walked," said the mother.

" He has gone, wise woman," said Tania.

The stream was flowing peacefully. The birds sang and the fish leapt out of the water to kiss the old woman's cheeks.

" He has gone because he loves you," said the wise woman with a smile.

" If the water left the stream, the stream could no longer sing," said Tania sadly.

" But if the stream left the water, the water would soon know how to find it again," smiled the wise woman.

" No," she went on, " I shall not scratch the earth under the roots of the big birch tree, nor read what is written under the belly of my old pike. I have no need to tell the dog how to find his master."

" Thank you, wise woman," said Tania. " If my love is strong enough, my heart will be my dog."

The breeze played with the young man's hair.

" Go away," said Tania to the breeze. " It is not for you to watch over my lover's sleep."

But the wind does not obey orders from a young girl, and certainly not after journeying with her through the long woods. Soon it was the wind alone that remained watching. It took hold of the young man's hair and then of the girl's and mingled them together.

" Why did you leave me ? "

He put his hand on her forehead as if to chase away all sad and heavy thoughts.

" It would be easier," he said, " for a live branch to break away from the tree when there is no wind, than for me to break away from you. I wanted only to get away from your parents. I went to look for work. As soon as I had found some, I should have returned for you. I knew nobody ; but they all knew me. ' You make the dogs howl and the little children cry,' they said. ' They are all dead in your village ; why do you come and haunt the houses of the living ? ' "

In the midst of the forest they found a little lake. No one ever came near its shores. Only the reindeer, whom an undying curiosity drives to the most secret corners of the world, had left their tracks in the sand.

Tania and her lover did not know that this lake was the very heart of the forest. They had built their hut just at the place where the knowing ear of a reindeer would have perceived a soft but eternal heart-beat.

And yet, no one could say that they lived like angels. One night she went to her old home and stole the fishing tackle they needed. In the same way, they found material for building their hut, and their boat.

In their innocence, they did not know that they were pulling fishes from the very heart of the forest. The young man would pass a stick through the mouths of the biggest pike, and then roast them over the fire. In the end, the fish would open, just like a ripe fruit and succulent pieces of flesh would fall into their hands. Then they would lie down on the ground and gather with their lips the scented treasure offered them by the forest. Often they both allowed themselves to be seduced by the same berry ; but it was only so that their lips might meet. So, they sometimes forgot their hunger, as another hunger was born in them and they satisfied it under the peaceful eyes of the trees and the sky.

When the sun was warm, they climbed on to a rock above the lake. Secretly they admired each other's image reflected in the water, and they jumped together into the lake, only to find themselves in each other's arms. But soon they had to loosen their embrace and swim side by side. To dry themselves, they rubbed each other with the gold dust of the sand.

Tania would pretend to be cold, and smiling, he covered her with the soft fur of a young reindeer. But most of the time, to keep her warm, he covered her with his own warm body.

Sometimes they felt almost a pain at being so happy and went to tell the granite reindeer: "We need nothing more."

The reindeer was silent. For what could he have answered them? What consolation did they need for loving each other so much?

Tania no longer felt sad when she watched the ships dying beyond the horizon.

"They only seem to die because we can no longer see them," she said.

"We too, one day, shall go so far away that no one will be able to see us. They will say we are dead. But we shall only be journeying from one land to another, as the ships pass from one horizon to another. One day, a ship more beautiful than any ship in the world will take us both and carry us away."

He did not like to hear her speak of death.

"If you have no body, how can I kiss you?" he said.

"You'll have no need to kiss me, as we shall have nothing more to separate us from each other, not even our bodies," she answered.

But if the ships pass from horizon to horizon, time too, travels from one season to another. Already the summer had died and given way to autumn. One after another the birds had left the lake and the cries of the wild duck no longer woke the two lovers in the morning.

The nights became longer and cooler. To sleep in each other's arms was no longer sufficient protection against the cold wind which blew through the hut.

To console themselves, they went more and more often to visit the wise woman. Her warm coffee comforted them even more than her kind words. She was telling them that love transforms the winter into spring, and that the snow becomes as soft as the down covering the ducklings.

They loved listening to her, but they believed only half of what she told them. She herself believed even less. She was very anxious about her friends and she went from house to house trying

to find work for them. She even went to see Tania's parents.

"I promise you," she declared, "the first place in Heaven or the last in hell. . . ." But she found herself outside the door long before the parents had had time to learn how to deserve either of these future residences.

The old woman was too poor to help otherwise than with advice. She still had her magic, but she did not like to use it except in really desperate cases. It was easy for her to predict terrifying punishments for those who beat their womenfolk on Sundays and to promise them as many misfortunes in the life beyond as there are fish in the biggest lakes. Those who behave badly in this world are always eager to know what will happen to them after death.

The more her friends were threatened by cold and hunger, the more thoughtful she became. Often she would scratch first her own head and then the trees, to see if there was anything written underneath their bark.

At last, after a great struggle against her self-esteem, she resolved to go and see the old pike. She was angry with him for being wiser than herself and was jealous of his wisdom; but most of all she could not forgive him for his unequalled modesty. He liked to rest in the shadows of a stone. You could only see his tail waving most delicately in the current, so as not to trouble the order of the universe.

The wise woman approached the pike and with many back-handed compliments, tried to save her own dignity.

"I desire to ask you a question, the answer to which I myself already know too well," she said. "Winter is approaching and I have two friends who have nothing to protect them from the cold. Their fate worries them as little as you yourself care about other people's troubles. They never stop devouring each other with their eyes and they imagine that this is food enough to protect them from hunger. If you weren't so much in love with yourself, you would have offered your own body as a meal. To preserve your flesh my own hands would have put you into salt. Without being afflicted with that shameless vanity which covers you from head to tail, I know the beneficial effect of my own advice, but it wouldn't displease me for once to find a remedy of a different kind."

The wise woman stared at the tail that was swaying almost imperceptibly in the current, but that was all she could see of the fish. Numerous air bubbles came to the surface of the brook, heralding the intention of the great magician to displace himself.

Suddenly the tail stopped moving and stiffened, renouncing the gentle lilt of the current. With majestic slowness the king rose, whilst to hide her emotion the wise woman whistled a little tune that her grandmother had taught her.

Like a ship in a gale the old pike capsized. His belly appeared where, just a few minutes before, his back had showed, and she gazed intently at the words written for her on a few scales that great age had spared :

" When one is a witch of so little experience, one ought not to entangle oneself in the destinies of others. Yet, being acquainted with your remarkable persistence, I well know that an answer from me is the only way to rid this poor brook of the zeal of your attentions.

" You must know that mysterious hands have placed two cups of stone under the granite reindeer.. And I, alone, know that from time to time he comes to life. His heart, filled with the pains and joys of centuries of silence, comes to life, and the tears of his eyes never die ; they are preserved for ever in the two stone cups. Those who drink from them live united in happiness for a great number of years, or they are given life eternal, but not on this earth. I advise you, witch, to look in the stone cup below the left foot of the reindeer.

" The tears you will find there will bring those who drink them joy and prosperity until a very advanced age, but in spite of my limited respect for what you call your own wisdom, I doubt whether you know the difference between right and left."

The wise woman cast an angry glance at the old pike. " I suppose there must be one or two things upon this earth that I do not know," she muttered between her teeth, " but I have an intuition that never lets me down. As for you, fish, I no longer require your services. Your impertinence has had the great advantage of relieving me of the necessity of being grateful."

That very day, a jug under her arm, the old woman went to visit the reindeer of granite.

The great autumn wind had come, and under the violence of its embraces the trees bowed and sang.

The love of the two young people had also grown deeper, and under the violence of their embraces their bodies had now the same grave voice of the autumn forest.

" Our love has ripened like the fruit that grows in the tundra," she said.

"Are you not afraid an angel might see it and carry it away ? "

Smiling, she said, " Then nothing more could ever part us."

And then came the day when the wise woman, who was waiting in front of the hut, stretched her arms towards them and said, " Come in. Instead of coffee, I have prepared for you a drink that I have drawn myself from the very veins of the earth. It is the blood of the earth and it will give you many years of joy and happi-

ness together. Life and death flow hand in hand, and only a woman as wise as myself would know which drink to choose for you."

They thanked her for her kindness and drank from the same cup.

"Will you still love me when I am as old as the earth?" asked Tania, smiling.

"The moon is still in love with the earth," he replied, "and yet they have known each other for a long time."

The wise woman saw them disappear among the trees of the forest. They seemed to be lighter and happier than ever before, and they held each other by the hand.

They made a meal of fish and went outside, as they always did, before going to sleep.

It was a peaceful autumn night. They talked in low voices and then became silent, for, in the great silence around them, there were words more important than those their mouths were speaking. Their ears could not understand, but their breasts were filled with sounds more mysterious and sweeter, even, than the tender music of the words: "I love you."

It was the autumn night that bore them to those strange invisible heights where body, time and space have all disappeared; where you look at each other with eyes filled with tears. For neither at the sun, nor at God, can you look without weeping.

Soon they were both overcome by a delicious languor and they stretched themselves out upon the sand of the shore.

To keep warm, they pressed against each other. They felt peaceful and happy as they allowed themselves to be lulled into silence by the tender arms that enfold those who truly love. They had become like little children.

A great desire for sleep came over them, but before entering a land more remote than any dream, they turned towards each other, face to face, and visions came to them: nameless visions, full of joy and tenderness that they had borne within themselves, like fruits which are not yet ripe.

Their hearts were now so light, but their lips were too heavy to move. Reverently and humbly they glided towards a dark night, waiting to enclose them in an everlasting embrace. And, with their bodies, there vanished also the whole earth, the trees, the lake. Even the stars they had loved together gave way to another sky, too beautiful to be contemplated without dying.

That morning, on awakening, the wise woman remembered the dream she had had during the night. She had seen herself with both her hands round the throat of the old pike, who was laughing sarcastically: "Strangle me, witch, but know that between your

intuition and the tip of my tail there is as much difference as between your left hand and your right."

To reassure herself, she went to the village and asked several people for a cup of coffee.

"Which hand do you call it, that passes me this cup? Right or left?" she asked many people.

The answers she received were far from reassuring. So she went into the forest and found the young lovers. For a long time her eyes rested upon their smile and their heads which were inclined towards each other. Then she understood that she had not made any mistake.

Yes. The old pike might well discover the most secret potions; but it needed the intuition of a modest wise woman to know how to use them.

She covered their bodies with sand to protect them from the wild beasts. When she had finished, snow began to fall.

And in the spring, when the snow melted, two little birches came out of the sand. So great was their longing for each other, that their trunks twined together and no lover who kissed their sweet-scented bark ever knew the bitterness of separation.

* * *

INTUITION

George Bernard Shaw and a party of friends attended the theatre one evening as guests of the woman author of the play.

"Remember," she told him jestingly, "you're not to leave in the middle of my play."

Shortly after the curtain went up, Shaw, seated directly behind the authoress, leaned forward to get a better view of the stage. After a few minutes, the authoress felt a tickling sensation on her neck. She reached back and felt a few loose strands of hair. Taking some hairpins from her purse, she quickly fastened the hair into place.

When the curtain came down, Shaw leaned back in his seat. As he did so, he let out a yelp of pain.

"Is something wrong?" asked the authoress, turning round quickly.

"Madam," he groaned, "if you will kindly take my beard out of your hair, I will *promise* not to leave until the play is over!"

Told by FRANCES BENSON

KARMESIN AND THE UNBELIEVER

"When you're dead, you're dead!" he said, "or that's what I used to think"

by GERALD KERSH

"IDIOT!" said Karmesin, "only fools believe nothing. There are two kinds of ass. One believes all he hears. The other believes nothing. You belong to the latter species. I tell you things, and you simply listen, and afterwards laugh. I would bet that you believe less than fifty per cent of the things I have told you. Yet I pass as a truthful man."

"You pass as a truthful man," I said.

"Bah! I seem to remember your selling stories which I told you. You have cashed in on me. You live on me. I support you, damn you. In one of those ill-written and badly constructed pieces of literature, you referred to me as 'Either the Greatest Liar or the Greatest Criminal the World Has Known.' I disapprove of this."

"Um?"

"Yes. Yet if I told you that every word I said to you was true, what would you say?"

"I still wouldn't necessarily believe it."

"Pfui!" said Karmesin, and spat. Then he smiled. It was a smile of extraordinary softness. "But you are young," he sighed, "and therefore foolish. I knew an unbeliever like you once."

"Yes?"

"Indeed. I met him on a cliff."

"What happened?"

"You will not believe me," said Karmesin.

"Oh yes, yes."

"I would guarantee that you will not."

"Tell me, anyway."

"Then give me a cigarette," said Karmesin. He sat still, looking at me. It is difficult for me to express just how that steady, dark stare affected me. I felt that what he was about to say simply must be true. For the very first time in the years I had known him, Karmesin became desperately sad. "Listen!" he said.

"I found myself a mass of nerves. I may say that any really

valuable man must be a mass of nerves. Only when you become aware that your nerves predominate in your make up, then, my young friend, is the time to give up work and relax. I went to Rocky Centre.

"Why did I go there? Because it was quiet. It was damnably quiet. There was a population of about three thousand. Most of them lived by fishing. *Bon!* I like fishermen.

"*Bon!* One night I walked out. It was a beautiful night; warm, calm, with a great round moon shining down. I sat on the very verge of the cliff. A hundred feet down, the sea licked at the rocks, and far out on the bosom of the Atlantic, great patches of phosphorescence drifted and heaved.

"Perhaps I dozed. It could not have been for more than five minutes. Then, when I awoke, I found that I had a companion. A man was sitting next to me: a man I did not like. He was small and thin, with a face—do you remember the rat, Medved? A face rather like that. I would not have trusted that man. He was a bad, sneaking little man.

"'I beg your pardon,' he said. 'But did I startle you?'

"'Oh, no,' I said.

"'Lovely night,' he said.

"'Mm.' I did not want to talk to the fellow. I was not in a talkative mood, anyway.

"'Look at the moon on the grass,' he said.

"'Ghostly,' I replied.

"'Oh,' he said. 'Ghostly? Surely not? I don't believe in that kind of thing.'

"'Don't you?' I asked.

"'No. Once you're dead, you're dead. Some people believe in an after-life. Not me. No such thing. I say: I want to see a thing before I believe it. Don't you?'

"I said: 'I suppose so.'

"'If there were ghosts and things, where would we be? My goodness, we couldn't be sure of anything. For myself,' he said, 'I should hate to think of an after-life.'

"'Mm.' I had to make conversation, so I said: 'Live near?'

"'Yes,' he replied, 'I have that house over there.'

"'The Lodge?' I asked; and, sick or not sick, I became interested, because The Lodge was obviously a rich man's house.

"'Yes,' he said.

"I looked at him. He was well dressed, but obviously not a gentleman. He had, indeed, something of the air of a valet; a gentleman's gentleman—anything but a gentleman. He went on:

"'You don't believe me, perhaps. Only right. I don't believe things I'm told. I'm an unbeliever. I only believe what I see.

But the fact is, I do own The Lodge. I inherited it from old Mr. Thurston.'

"'Son?' I asked.

"'No, valet. Kind of head cook and bottle-washer. I was everything to poor Mr. Thurston.'

"'Were you, indeed?'

"'Yes. I pressed his clothes—not that he bothered about that, much, poor gentleman—and cooked his food.'

"'Hm!'

"'No shame in that,' he went on. 'There is a poem which says, *A civilized man cannot live without cooks.* I am a good cook. I think I can cook fish better than any man alive.'

"'Oh,' I said.

"'Yes.' He looked out over the sea, pointed down, and said: 'See those phosphorescent bits down there?'

"'Well?'

"'They shine, eh?'

"'Yes,' I said. I did not like this little valet, and rose. But something kept me from going away.

"He said: 'Poison.'

"'What?' I asked.

"'That phosphorescent stuff. It's made up of animalculæ. If you baled up a pint or so of that shiny stuff, and drank it, you'd die. Of course, nobody'd go and drink it. But . . .'

"'Well?'

"'Oysters can live on it. Mussels, too.'

"'Ah.'

"'Mr. Thurston liked mussels.'

"'Oh,' I said; and I swear to you that I felt a shiver run up and down my back.

"'If,' he said, 'if a mussel ate that stuff, and you ate that mussel, do you know what would happen?'

"'I can guess,' I said. 'One would die, I suppose?'

"'Ah-ah,' he replied. He looked at me again, and muttered: 'Mr Thurston liked mussels. He loved Moules Marinières. I used to cook it for him. Of course, he was grateful.'

"'Yes?'

"'He left everything to me,' said the little man, looking up.

"'Congratulations,' I said.

"'Thanks.' He was silent for a moment, then, quite startlingly, said: 'Do you believe in ghosts?'

"'No,' I said. 'Why?'

"'Oh, nothing. Yes, I was telling you. I'm a gentleman now, you know. He left everything to me. At least, he nearly did. Only at the last moment, there came a long-lost nephew.'

" ' Well ? ' I said, with a sneaking suspicion of what was coming.

" ' The old man was glad to see him : a fellow that wasted money like water, mark you. A profligate. The old man took to him more than me ; and I'd been with him for thirty years. He thought he was good looking. " My handsome nephew," he used to say.'

" ' Well, well, well.'

" ' Yes. One evening they wanted to eat Moules Marinières. I am very good at cooking Moules Marinières.'

" ' Ah.'

" ' I cooked them. And . . .'

" ' Well ? '

" He lit a cigarette, and said : ' Nobody could prove anything.'

" ' Prove what ? '

" ' Well . . . they died, the old man and his nephew.'

" I gulped. Something about that horrid little man brought a bad taste into my mouth. It was so obvious. He had discovered the poisonous properties of the phosphorescent animalculæ, and had poisoned the old man and his nephew. ' So you boiled up a nice stew,' I said.

" ' The secret of Moules Marinières is frying with a bit of butter no bigger than a walnut, and some chopped parsley ; and the beards must be removed. No boiling. No. Well, they both happened to die. I didn't eat any, and I lived. And the original will held good, because he'd had no time to change it, and I was the heir. The house, the land, and two hundred thousand.'

" ' So you're a rich man,' I said.

" ' Yes.' He looked down, and shuddered. ' Horrible rocks,' he said, ' horrible, horrible rocks. If you fell down on them they'd tear you to pieces like a wolf's teeth.'

" ' I can imagine it.'

" ' It wouldn't hurt much, either.'

" I looked straight into his eyes. He had hideous little eyes which seemed to shine. ' I think you're a murderer,' I said.

" ' No,' he replied. ' No. Not a . . . well. Some people would be afraid of murder, on account of ghosts, and after-life, and other such nonsense. But not me. When you're dead you're dead. Eh ? '

" I said nothing.

" He went on : ' Well, I inherited. But it's lonely here.'

" ' With a murder on your conscience,' I said.

" He became angry. ' What if I did ? What if I did kill them ? Who could prove it ? And there's nothing to punish a man if the law can't prove it, is there ? '

" ' I don't know,' I said.

"'But I do! There's nothing. When you're dead, you're dead. I can tell you that. I believe it! No . . . nothing.'

"'So,' I said.

"He was silent. The moon shone down on him. The waves licked the rocks, and over all there was the hissing of the sea.

"Suddenly he spoke again: 'There's one thing I can't understand.'

"'Oh? What?'

"'Just one thing. When you're dead, you're dead, I know that. But there's just one thing. You know . . .' He stopped, and his face underwent a horrible change.

"'Well, what?' I asked.

"'You know everybody dies,' he said.

"'Certainly everybody dies,' I said.

"'But I can't! I can't die!'

"I stared. He looked back, with all hell in his eyes, and said: 'Look!'

"And before I had time to step forwards and stop him, he walked right over the edge of the cliff.

"I am not a nervous man, but it was ten or fifteen seconds before I could bring myself to look down. I could see no sign of him: nothing but the rocks and the long creamy swell of the sea."

Karmesin stopped. "What did you do then?" I asked.

"I went to the town and yelled murder," he said. "I told them how a man had jumped over a cliff. They laughed at me. 'A little thin man in a black suit?' they asked. I agreed. 'Why,' they said, 'lots o' people see that. That's little Henry, old Mr. Thurston's valet, who died thirteen years ago come Michaelmas.'"

"That's all," said Karmesin. "I suppose you won't believe this, too. I admit that I was sick, with nerves, and I also admit I had been asleep for a few minutes. You will say that it was all a dream. But it was true. And the disbelief of fools never alters facts. Lend me a cigarette. I don't feel too good . . ."

He finished his cigarette before I spoke to him again. "That," I said, "is quite a conventional ghost story. But I admit that I like the touch about the incredulity of the ghost itself. What happened after that? Did you go back?"

Karmesin looked at me. His large eyes rolled round. "What do you take me for?" he asked, "a fool?"

"It must have been frightening," I said.

He laughed. "I ought to have mentioned that I am practically devoid of fear. The next night I went back, and again the little man appeared. This time, I said to him, 'Sit down, my friend. Permit me to do some of the talking.' So he sat down and waited.

"'Now listen,' I said to him. 'Unbelief is all very well, within its logical limits. *Bon!* You do not believe in ghosts. Good. Yet the fact remains that you are a ghost yourself, since you died a considerable time ago. Why try to fool yourself, my ghostly friend? Why try to fool me? Do you realize with whom you are dealing? I,' I said, 'am Karmesin. You must have heard of me. I have cleaned up more heavy capital out of scientifically organized crime than any man in the history of the world. *Bon!* Then listen to my proposition . . .'

"When that ghost realized who I was," continued Karmesin, "I don't mind telling you that he was terrified of me. 'Why?' I asked, 'should you waste your time jumping over cliffs, when you know perfectly well that you can't hurt yourself. Why be selfish? Why devote your nights to purely selfish suicidal attempts, when you might be useful to your fellow men? I beg your pardon, to those who used to be your fellow men? Let us get together.'

"He was not insensible of the honour I was conferring on him—I, who rarely used accomplices. 'Let us go into business together,' I said.

"We talked all night. In the morning I went to see Mr. Kildare, an estate agent. The Lodge, a most beautiful old mediæval house, was empty. I rented it, fully furnished, at a very low price. Then I offered to sub-let The Lodge to some wealthy American at a fantastically high rental, guaranteeing a nightly manifestation.

"The gentleman was delighted, but wanted to see the ghost before he signed the agreement. I invited him to The Lodge for a night, and let him see for himself. It worked beautifully. At six thirty in the evening, he was horrified to see my little Henry glide across the room carrying a phantom pair of trousers. At eleven fifteen, when he was going to bed, he jumped a foot into the air as the icy little fingers of my Henry undid his bow-tie for him.

"'Okay, I'll take the place,' he said. 'What's your price?'

"'Two thousand pounds for the summer.'

"'Two thousand pounds, my foot!'

"'Think how you can astonish your friends,' I said.

"And he duly moved in for the summer.

"There were certain unpleasant aspects of Henry's character which I had failed to observe: he caused the cook to fly into shrieking hysterics by chucking her under the chin, and used to quarrel violently with the second footman below stairs.

"Again, no brandy was safe with Henry around, and on more than one occasion my tenant was annoyed to observe cigars floating through the air, obviously stolen from his cabinet. Furthermore,

he began to miss studs, and even socks. But on the whole everybody was satisfied; especially when Henry grinned over the shoulder of the Duke of Tisket and Tasket as that progressive young nobleman was cleaning his teeth one Saturday night.

"Yet things were not going quite as I had anticipated. I had meant to use Henry in a vast organization of haunting. I meant to take several villas, castles, and granges, and to arrange for a genuine haunting once every night. A ghost can travel fast: time and space are as nothing to him. But Henry became unreliable. He spent all his time in The Lodge, scarcely moving out of doors. I reasoned with him: the constant lack of fresh air, I argued, must be very bad for his health . . . But no.

"I was puzzled, until the night of June the eighth, when I was staying at The Lodge as the guest of my tenant. I could not sleep. I told you that my nerves were bad. At two in the morning I went downstairs to the library for a book. As I approached the door I heard voices: Henry's reedy little voice, and that of a woman.

"Imagine my surprise when I saw Henry, sitting on a sofa, making himself very comfortable with his master's brandy and cigars, with his arm about the waist of a lady in sixteenth century dress, who was coyly holding her head underneath her left arm, sometimes lifting it up in order to whisper and giggle in his ear!

"The miserable wretch had fallen madly in love with the spectre of Lady Jane Yule, who had been decapitated in the reign of Henry VIII, and who had been haunting The Lodge ever since. It was in vain that I pleaded with them, saying that respectable ghosts, like respectable servants, might quite easily haunt in couples, provided that they were properly married. But no. The Lady Jane would not hear of it. Go into service? She lifted her head up at arm's length in order to look down on me.

"My scheme had fallen through. I was not a loser by it, but my annoyance was very bitter indeed, my friend. Never hire accomplices, I warn you: they always let you down. I had to leave shortly afterwards, to attend to the affair of the Cassidy Emeralds. And it was not until two years later that I learned how my tenant had lured Henry and the Lady Jane to America with some absurd promise connected with a company directorship."

Another lively tale of this organizer of "crime with a difference"

KARMESIN AND THE TAILOR'S DUMMY
by Gerald Kersh

in your next month's Argosy on sale June 9th

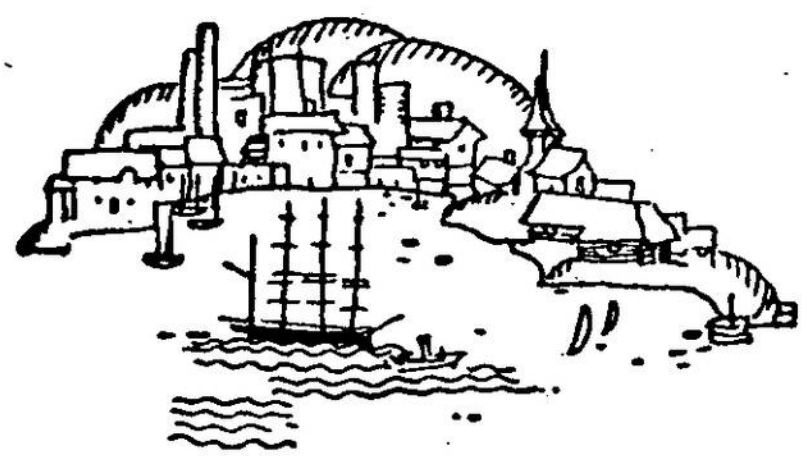
Do You Remember?

SMALL harbours seen at dusk, rocks shining,
The water iridescent with the hour, and slackened sails
Drifting to anchorage where houses, grey, set
With hollyhock and birch, make a new moon of welcome ;
Do you remember—
You who have seen them ?

Or nights in June when white magnolias,
Candled and ethereal, reach to the stars, and the south
Gathers its fragrance.
There are a thousand memories, my dear, my secret one,
Do you remember ?

And there are gardens old and trimmed and fragrant,
And houses aromatic with the years,
And narrow streets and byways edged with meditation
And leisurely with footsteps ;
Farms wide and quiet as the afternoon,
Whose fields, rippling towards sunset,
Sharpen the moment with the scent of mint.
Oh, do you remember ?

STRUTHERS BURT



IN THE SPRING

"I have done you a real service," he said

by GUY DE MAUPASSANT

ON the first sunny days of the year, when earth stirs in her sleep and clothes herself with green, when the balmy air caresses our cheeks, fills our lungs, and seems to penetrate to the very heart, a vague yearning for unknown joys steals over us, an impulse to run and leap, to roam at random in pursuit of adventure, and to drink deep draughts of the spring weather. After the severe winter of last year, the spring inspired me with such longing to be free of all restraint, that it was like a fever in the blood or the swift flow of sap in my veins.

When I woke up one morning I saw through my window, above the roofs of the neighbouring houses, the great blue vault of the sky, brilliant with sunshine. The canaries in their cages by the window were shrieking themselves hoarse. On every floor the maids were singing at their work. Cheerful sounds from the streets greeted my ears, and in holiday mood I escaped from the house without caring whither I went.

There were smiles on every face; spring, warm and radiant, had come again, and happiness was in the air. It was as if the whole town felt the caress of an amorous breeze. The young women, who passed by in their morning frocks, had a veiled tenderness in their glances, and in all their movements a languid grace which set my heart in a flutter. Half unconsciously I made my way to the Seine. Steamers were leaving for Suresnes, and I was suddenly seized with an irresistible longing for the country and the woods.

The deck of the little steamer was crowded, for, resist as you may, the first sunshine of the year lures you out of the house. Everyone is astir, coming and going and chatting to his neighbour.

My own neighbour happened to be a lady; a little work-girl, I judged her, with all the natural grace of the true-bred Parisian. She had a charming little head, hair like spun sunshine, clustering in curls round her temples, and rippling down to her ears and the nape of her neck, where it ended in golden down so soft and fine that you could hardly see it and yet you were burning to cover it with kisses.

I stared at her so hard that she turned towards me; then she suddenly lowered her eyelids, while the corners of her mouth quivered with the merest suggestion of a smile, revealing on her upper lip the same soft silken down, glinting faintly in the sun.

The river flowed smoothly between ever-widening banks. A warm peacefulness brooded in the atmosphere, and all space seemed full of murmurous life. My neighbour raised her eyes. Again they met mine, and this time she smiled deliberately. She was charming when she smiled, and her swift glance revealed to me a thousand mysteries I had never before suspected. I discovered in her eyes unknown depths, all the joys of love, all the poetry that inspires our dreams, all the bliss we are eternally seeking. I was seized with a mad desire to clasp her in my arms and bear her away to some spot, where I could murmur in her ears the tender music of loving words.

I was just going to speak to her when someone touched me on the shoulder. I turned round in surprise and saw an ordinary-looking man, neither young nor old, who was gazing at me with a melancholy expression on his face.

"I have something to say to you," he began. He must have noticed my expression of disgust, for he added:

"Something important."

I rose and followed him to the other end of the boat.

"My dear sir," he continued, "when winter comes, bringing with it cold and rain and snow, your doctor is always saying to you:

"'Keep your feet warm and beware of chills, colds, bronchitis and pleurisy.'

"And you take all sorts of precautions, wear flannel underclothing and thick overcoats and shoes. And for all that you sometimes find yourself laid up for a couple of months. But when spring comes with its leaves and flowers, its warm, enervating breezes, its scents of field and meadow, stirring in you a vague restlessness and inexplicable emotions, there is no one to say to you:

"'Beware of love! It is lurking everywhere, lying in wait for you at every corner. Its snares are set; its weapons sharpened; all its wiles are prepared for you. Beware of love, beware! It is more dangerous than colds, bronchitis, or pleurisy. It never forgives and it drives us all to irreparable acts of folly.' Yes, sir, I tell you the Government ought to post huge placards upon the walls every year: '*Spring is here again. Citizens, beware of love,*' just as one writes on the door of a house, 'Mind the paint.' Well, as the Government neglects this duty, I take it upon myself to say to you:

"'Beware of love.' It is ready to pounce upon you, and I am bound to warn you, just as in Russia one warns a passing stranger that his nose is threatened with frost-bite."

I was amazed at this extraordinary individual. Assuming an air of dignity I replied:

"It seems to me, sir, that you are interfering in a matter that does not concern you."

He made a deprecating gesture and replied:

"Oh, my dear sir, my dear sir, if I see a man in danger of drowning, am I to leave him to perish? Let me tell you my story and you will understand why I have ventured to speak to you like this.

It was only last year, at this very season. I am a clerk. From my office window I caught a glimpse of bright blue sky, where swallows were circling, and it made me feel like dancing among my black cardboard boxes. My longing for liberty rose to such a pitch that I screwed up my courage and went to see my own special slave-driver. He was a peevish man, always in a vile temper. I said I was feeling ill. He stared me in the face and said:

"'I don't believe a word of it. However, you can go. How do you think a man can run an office with clerks like you?'

"So I took myself off and went down to the Seine. It was just such weather as today and I boarded the steamer for St. Cloud.

"My dear sir, if only my chief had refused me leave! My whole nature seemed to expand in the sunshine. I was in love with everything, the steamer, the river, the trees, the houses, my neighbours. I was yearning for something to embrace, no matter what. Love was laying its snares for me.

"At the Trocadero a girl came on board carrying a small parcel, and sat down opposite me. She was undoubtedly pretty, but it is extraordinary how much more attractive women appear to one in fine weather in the early spring. There is about them a heady charm, a mysterious something peculiar to themselves. It is like the taste of wine after cheese.

"I looked at her, and she, too, looked at me—but only now and then, like that girl of yours just now. At last I thought that we had advanced far enough with this exchange of glances to enter into conversation, so I spoke to her, and she replied. She was as charming as you please, and she turned my head completely.

"She left the boat at St. Cloud, where she had a parcel to deliver—and I followed her. When she returned from her errand, the boat had gone. I walked beside her, and we sighed, both of us, affected by the balmy sweetness of the air.

"'It would be lovely in the woods,' I said.

"'Yes, wouldn't it?' she agreed.

" ' Would you care to come for a stroll ? ' I ventured.

" She stole a swift glance at me from beneath her eyelids, as if taking stock of me, and then hesitated a moment before she consented. Presently we were wandering side by side through the trees. The tall, thick grass, vividly green beneath the transparent shelter of the young leaves, was flooded with sunshine and swarming with tiny creatures, and they, too, were busy making love. Birds were singing in every bush. My companion suddenly began to skip and run, intoxicated with fresh air, and the scents that rose from the earth. And I ran after her, frisking in the same ridiculous way. What a fool one does make of oneself sometimes !

" Wild with delight, she burst into song—airs from the operas, and that song of Musette. Oh, that song of Musette ! How exquisitely poetic it seemed to me then ! It moved me almost to tears. That's the sort of rubbish that turns one's head. Never take a girl into the country who sings, especially one who sings that song of Musette.

" Presently she was tired and sat down to rest on a green bank. I threw myself at her feet, and seized her hands, her little hands all covered with needle pricks. The sight of them went to my heart.

" ' These,' I said to myself, ' are the sacred marks of toil.'

" My dear sir, do you know what they really mean, these sacred marks of toil ? They stand for all the gossip of the workroom, for whispered vulgarity, for minds polluted with obscene stories, for foolish tittle-tattle, for all the narrow-mindedness and squalid usages of life, of those whose fingertips bear those sacred marks of toil.

" We gazed lingeringly into each other's eyes.

" Oh, those eyes of women ! What power is theirs, to bewilder and obsess, to conquer and dominate ! How infinite seems the promise within their depths ! This practice is known as looking into each other's soul. Stuff and nonsense, my dear fellow ! If one could really see into the soul, one would be far more discreet.

" To cut a long story short, a madness seized me, and, losing my head, I tried to clasp her in my arms.

" ' Hands off ! ' she cried.

" At that I flung myself at her feet and poured out all the pent-up emotion of my heart. She seemed surprised at my changed demeanour and shot a sidelong glance at me, as if to say :

" ' So that's the sort of fool you are ! Very well, my friend, we shall see.'

" In love, we men are the innocent customers, while women are the wide-awake shopkeepers. I might have done as I pleased

with her. Later on I realized my stupidity. But what I was striving after was something different—an ethereal, an idealized love. I sought the shadow when I might have gained the substance.

"When she was tired of my protestations, she rose and we returned to St. Cloud. We did not part until we reached Paris, and then she seemed so sad that I asked her the reason.

"'I was thinking how few days like this there are in life,' she answered.

"My heart almost burst with emotion.

"We met again the following Sunday, and every succeeding Sunday. I took her to Bougival, Saint-Germain, Maisons-Laffitte, Poissy, to every haunt sacred to the suburban lover. The little minx led me on, pretending a passion for me. I lost my head entirely, and three months later I married her.

"I ask you, sir, what can a lone man do, a mere clerk, with no family to advise him? One thinks to oneself how happy life would be with one woman. And so one marries her. And then she scolds you from morning till night; you discover that she is stupid and ignorant. She keeps on bawling that song of Musette, that intolerable song of Musette.

"She wrangles with the coalman, relates to the porter's wife intimate domestic details, confides to the servant next door secrets of the most delicate nature, involves her husband in difficulties with the tradesmen, and her head is stuffed with such absurd stories, such idiotic superstitions, such grotesque notions, such outrageous prejudices, that one could weep with disgust, whenever one talks to her."

He was so deeply agitated that he had to pause for breath. I looked compassionately at this poor simple-minded devil, and was on the point of replying when the steamer stopped at St. Cloud.

The girl who had attracted my attention rose from her seat to go ashore. She brushed past me, with a sidelong glance at me and a smile, at once furtive and seductive. Then she alighted on the pontoon.

I sprang up to follow her, when my neighbour seized me by the sleeve. I jerked myself free, but he caught me by the tails of my frock-coat and pulled me back.

"You shan't go, you shan't go," he cried in such loud tones that everyone turned round.

I heard a ripple of laughter on all sides, and I stood there, petrified and furious, but lacking the courage to face further ridicule and scandal.

And the steamer moved on.

The girl remained standing on the pontoon and watched me

disappear with an air of disappointment, while my tormentor rubbed his hands together and whispered in my ear:

"There, young man, I have done you a real service."

* * *

MY KINGDOM FOR A HORSE

The seat on a horse makes gentlemen of some and grooms of others, says Cervantes—but gentlemen and grooms alike, can you recognize these enthusiastic riders? Allow one point for naming the rider, one for the author, one for the source, making thirty points in all. Twenty or more points scored indicates brilliant fireside horsemanship! The answers are on page 109.

1. *Ça, ha! He bounds from the earth as if his entrails were hairs: le cheval volant, the Pegasus . . .! When I bestride him I soar, I am a hawk!*
   He is indeed a horse!
2. *In the moonlight, outside the lone house, "his horse in the silence champ'd the grasses of the forest's ferny floor;" but every word he spake fell "echoing through the shadowiness."*
3. *A thousand miles in a day was easy cantering for the wonder horse and his rider, up in the heavens where the earth looked hardly bigger than the moon . . .*
4. *Five and twenty mounts for five and twenty intrepid riders—and* all *of them Gentlemen!*
5. *The one-eyed, sad white drake marooned, and a highwayman rider on his famous strawberry mare to the rescue . . .*
6. *"Good Speed!" cried the watch, as the gate bolts undrew;*
   "Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through . . .
   and three hard ridden horses, running stirrup to stirrup, but only one got through.
7. *He said nothing; he flung himself from the room, flung himself upon his horse, and rode madly off in all directions . . .*
8. *Her took sick and her died; and the skirling and groans from her ghastly white ghost can have taught her dismayed owner but one hard lesson!*
9. *The dragon roared, the trees did shake, the knight did tremble and the horse did quake. And the outcome of this epic contest was hardly satisfactory in the end!*
10. *And finally—who said—and where—?*
    "Go anywhere in England where there are natural, wholesome, contented, and really nice English people; and what do you always find? That the stables are the real centre of the household."

THE LONG CHANCE

"It wouldn't be honest," he said

by RICHARD STERN

ANDY sat on the edge of his bunk, his big feet set wide apart, his thick hands clasped and his face furrowed with thought, with worry. Four or five of the crew sat round watching him, waiting for Carl to bring up the burning question again on this, the last night out.

Carl was leaning against the bulkhead smiling a little in his sharp way. "Have you got it worked out yet?" he said. "Got the arithmetic all straight?"

Andy opened his hands. He studied their palms. He closed them again. He said nothing. He smiled in a helpless sort of way.

"A case of brandy you've got," Carl said. "Good French brandy. Cost you ten pounds in Marseilles. A bargain, you said. You an' the missus like brandy, a little nip after dinner." He waited until the laughter died. "You got any idea what the duty'll be?"

"Well," Andy said. He shook his head slowly. "Not much, perhaps." He sat there like a great bear at the baiting, taking his punishment, wishing it would stop, knowing no way in which to avoid it. "Perhaps not much," he said again.

"The stuff sells for three pounds a bottle," Carl said. "You paid less than one. The difference is duty. Say twenty-five shillings on twelve bottles, fifteen pounds. Have you got fifteen pounds for that?"

Andy was thinking of the little bungalow in Kent, of Minna, of money in the savings account, of a television set some day, a really good one, with a large clear screen so that Minna, on the long lonely nights when he was at sea, could watch and listen, perhaps laugh and forget for a time that she was alone.

And perhaps a small sip of the brandy at bedtime, just a sip, to lie pleasantly on the stomach in the empty darkness. They understood one another, he and Minna, and waiting, he knew, is the hard part of life and small things help, small things like brandy, and television, and the other things he had managed to bring to her. But he had had no idea that on ten pounds' worth of brandy—

Carl said, "Have you got fifteen pounds so's the missus can have her snifter after dinner?"

" No," Andy said, and he listened to the laughter again.

" I tell you what," Carl said. " I've got an idea." The laughter died down. Andy lifted his head and watched and waited. " I've been thinkin'," Carl said, " an' I got the answer." He paused. He smiled. " Smuggle it through the Customs, that's all you have to do. Just smuggle the case right through. Then you won't have to pay nothin' ! "

Andy had thought of that, of course. He smiled at Carl and shook his great head slowly. " That wouldn't be honest," he said. " If they've got a law—" The laughter smothered the rest of it, and he sat there patiently waiting for it to die. His thick hands were clasped again. There was no use trying to explain.

" Wouldn't be honest ! " Carl was saying scornfully. " That's the only reason ! Do you hear him ? Wouldn't be honest ! I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll bet you ten to one you couldn't get that case through the Customs if you tried. How's that ? Ten to one. You think it over."

Andy sat alone on the edge of his bunk, and stared down at his hands, at his feet, at the deck itself. And two of the many ship's cats came in and saw him and eyed one another warily and climbed up on to his great knees and sat there purring at him. He stroked them idly and spoke to them in a low voice, taking pleasure from their companionship, while his mind walked slowly round and round his problem, thinking of Minna, of brandy, of the Customs, of Carl and of Carl's bet.

And the cats, his friends, purred on, as if they were talking to him, telling him something, telling him— His big hands stopped in their stroking. He stared at the cats. They purred on, and Andy was smiling, and his mind was at last at rest . . .

They docked in the morning. They finished their jobs. In the fo'c'sle, Carl cornered him again, and the rest of the crew gathered round, grinning. " Going to take my bet ? " Carl said. " Ten to one ? And some of the other fellows want to be in on this, too. How 'bout it ? "

" Well," Andy said. His hands were deep in his pockets. He looked at Carl and he looked at the others, and he looked at the case of brandy on his bunk. Slowly he nodded. He pulled out a small leather purse. " I've got twelve pounds," he said.

The bosun held the stakes ; ashore, in the bar across the street from the Customs shed. And they all crowded against the window to watch Andy, with kit bag and suitcase, in shore clothes, come ponderously down for his inspection. And they waited, hearing nothing of the talk.

The Customs officer went through the sea bag. He patted Andy.

He reached for the suitcase. Andy said, " I can't open that."

" Why ? " The Customs officer was smiling.

" Well," Andy said, " it's full of cats." His big face was crinkled with the effort of explanation. " I mean, we've got too many on board, an' the skipper says get rid of some of them."

" Good story," the Customs officer said. " One of the best I've heard."

" It's true," Andy said. " The crew, they wanted to toss them over the side. But I like cats, an' I thought that if I could take them ashore I might find homes for them." He was sweating ; his big face shone.

" I like cats," he said again. " Don't open it, please." His voice shook.

" Look, Mac," the Customs officer said. He was undoing the straps. " It won't work. It's a good try, but it won't work." He undid the fastening and opened the case.

There were six cats, although it seemed like quite a few more. They came out in a rush, clawing and snarling and spitting with rage. They circled the Customs shed, gathering speed, and then they streaked back along the wharf and up the gangplank and disappeared on to the ship.

Andy closed the empty suitcase. He strapped it carefully. He gave the Customs man one long, mournful look. Then he plodded back aboard ship.

In the bar, the bosun was laughing so hard he cried into his drink. And the crew were laughing, too. All but Carl. Carl said, " He can't get away with it ! Not that big dumb—"

" You made a bet," the bosun said. " An' that's how it goes."

It was forty minutes before Andy was back in the Customs shed again. He had the suitcase in his hand, and he leaned a little against its weight. He set it down at the Customs officer's feet. He wiped his broad face. " Do you want to open it this time ? " he said. " They was jolly hard to catch again."

The Customs officer stared at the suitcase. He stared at Andy. He opened his mouth and then he closed it again, and Andy waited, quivering inside. " Go on," the Customs officer said. " Get the hell out of here."

So there it was. Andy's face showed nothing. " Yes, sir," he said, and he picked up the suitcase and his kit bag and walked slowly across the road and into the bar. He was thinking of Minna, and of a television set, and perhaps, although he didn't know what such things cost, of one of those mechanical washing machines that took clothes and a little soap and did everything, all by itself. Minna, he thought, would like that ; she could sip her brandy, and laugh at the

television screen and listen to the machine doing her work for her. The concept pleased him.

He let the prospect of these simple delights curl inside him and warm the smile with which he greeted his mates. They crowded round him, pummelling his shoulders. All, that is, except Carl, who sourly watched the bosun take out an envelope full of coins.

Andy stood among them, massive and solid, smiling his helpless sort of smile, while the bosun counted the money into his hand. From time to time the bosun stopped his counting to wipe his eyes. " Them cats," he said. " Squallin' an' snortin' through that shed ! "

" Well," Andy said. " I fed them pretty well when I went back on board. I don't hardly think they mind any more." Minna would like that part of it ; Minna liked cats, just as he did. He folded the money and put it carefully into his purse. He smiled at everybody, including Carl. He picked up his kit bag. " Well," he said.

" How about a drink ? " the bosun said.

Andy shook his head. " I've got to go."

" The old woman ? " the bosun said. " She'd never know."

Andy shook his head again. " It wouldn't be honest."

Carl snorted. " Honest ! " He slapped the suitcase with his open hand. It gurgled gently. " Honest, he says ! "

Andy nodded. " An' I got to tell the man, too."

" What man ? " the bosun said. " Tell him what ? "

" Why," Andy said, " the Customs man. I got to tell him I got this brandy here. For my wife." And he pulled out the small purse. " An' I got money to pay duty on it." He paused there. " The way the law says."

* * *

NEW LINE

There is a story told to the effect that a farmer in Sussex once bought a prize bull at great price, and that he displayed it to a neighbour with immense pride.

Some few weeks later the neighbour was astonished to see this magnificent bull harnessed to a plough. " What on earth are you doing, using a prize bull like that ? " he asked.

The farmer replied dourly : " I am going to teach that animal that life ain't all pleasure . . . ! "

W. J. BROWN, *Jamaican Journey*

NO WITNESS

A rope like that didn't break by chance

by H. G. EVARTS

PASSANG, the Sherpa guide, finished chopping the last step in the ice and climbed wearily on to solid rock. Braced against his axe, he pushed back his goggles and wiped the sweat from his face. He saw the summit of Karkori not five hundred feet above, a wicked white dazzle in the mid-afternoon sun, and in the distance, topping the vast Himalayan wall, Everest itself. He stared up at the peak for a moment and brought his mind back to the Americans waiting below.

Too much ice, he could tell at a glance. The short fat one was tiring fast, and the younger man, the quick tempered one called Crail, lacked sufficient experience to anchor. They could make it, Passang knew, by cutting more steps, but that would leave no margin of safety for the descent to camp before dark; the Americans were tourists, not climbers.

Having decided to turn back, he knocked the snow from his crampon spikes and started down, not without regret. The peak was unimportant; other tourists had climbed it before. He himself, Passang Buri, an Everest Tiger had climbed it. In his prime he had portered for men like Mallory and Odell and Bauer, the great ones. Perhaps, he thought, he was getting too old, over-cautious, afraid to take a calculated risk.

It was then he heard the scream.

The sound shattered around him, a shrill piercing screech of terror, sharp as a whistle blast, then ceased abruptly. For a second or two the vibrations seemed to quiver in the thin still air, fading to complete and final silence.

His reaction was instinctive. Moving deliberately, he backed down the steps two at a time, supported by his rope and axe, down across the face of the ridge towards the cornice that cut off his view of the Americans. He did not have to speculate. He knew. One or the other, or both, had slipped.

He had been less than eager to guide them in the first place, now so late in the season. But he had needed the money, needed

it badly. Tourists were scarce since the war, and a family man had mouths to feed. He could not afford to refuse rich Americans. But now—

As he rounded the corner his stomach contracted with sudden sour violence. The younger man, Crail, was crouched on all fours half way down the slope, clinging by one hand to his axe, retching into the snow. Of his companion, Danby, there was no sign. For an instant Passang held the hope that Danby was safe on the ledge below, and then he saw the skid marks on the ice, the faint but unmistakable pattern of scratches that led straight to a shallow ledge fifty feet beneath him.

Sliding down beside Crail, he drove the prong of his axe into a crack, took two turns round the head with his line and thrust the end into the American's hand. Crail raised his head and peered up at Passang with pale bloodshot eyes. A tremor shook his shoulders. "Danby!" he breathed. "God—"

"Belay me!"

Crail stared uncomprehendingly. "Anchor yourself," Passang said. "I'm going down for a look."

It was a gesture, nothing more. Danby was gone. By what miracle Crail had been spared he did not yet understand. He was still too stunned to reconstruct the accident in his mind. He could think only of a fat middle aged man sliding to his death, spinning off into space and dropping thousands of feet to the glacier below. That Crail, who had witnessed the fall, should be on the verge of hysteria, was natural. And yet, as Passang slithered down over the ice on his belly, lowering himself by the rope, some detail of the scene, some blurred impression, registered on the screen of his consciousness.

A yard or so from the edge he stopped. He could see over the lip, down to the ledge far below, and on to the mass of the glacier where they had crossed that morning. Their tent camp was a tiny speck against the rocks on the opposite side. He lay there studying the terrain, a stocky dark-skinned man with silver hair over the temples and a face seamed by constant-wind and snowglare. Presently he let out a long breath and hauled himself back up to the steps beside Crail, filled with sick and empty futility.

The American straightened and rubbed the back of his hand over his mouth. He stood nearly a head taller than Passang, a lean, bony-faced man, thin-lipped with a pinched bluish look round the eyes. In a whisper he said, "Is he . . . ?"

Passang nodded. In fifteen years he had never lost a man; that was his record. But for the moment he was not even curious how it had happened. He knew he would relive this past half

hour as long as he lived, and had no wish to prolong it.

" Did you see—him, down there ?" Crail said. " The body—?"

" No," Passang said. " No. We won't find him." He coiled in his rope, surprised to find that his hands were trembling. "We'll start whenever you're ready, sir."

" I'll be all right in a minute." Some colour had returned to Crail's cheeks and his voice was steadier. " You mean," he said slowly, " his body won't be found ? "

Passang made his tone purposely matter-of-fact. " Next season maybe. Not this year."

Crail looked at him, a sharpness in his glance. " You sure of that ? "

Passang shrugged. The matter seemed irrelevant to him. The man was dead. A week or more would pass before a search party could organize and reach the base of Karkori. By then the monsoon would have broken. " I think he fell in an avalanche track. Maybe never."

" Poor old Dan." Crail shook his head. " Just one slip—"

Passang turned away, anxious to leave this place before Crail lost his nerve altogether. For that reason he did not ask the obvious question. He said simply, " God was with you."

" It was Dan's idea," Crail said. " Like a damn fool I agreed. If we'd stayed where you told us—well, he'd be here now."

Passang did not answer. Crail, not Danby, had been the one to object when Passang left them behind, roped and secure on the ledge, while he climbed ahead to cut a path. Crail had been impatient to push on to the summit regardless. But that would come out at the enquiry later. His one purpose now was to get Crail down off the mountain to safety. He said, " It's getting late, sir."

Checking the fastener on his belt, he motioned Crail to rope on behind. Carefully he worked down, following the footholds he had cut less than an hour before, pausing every few feet to take up the slack between himself and Crail, until he reached firm footing. On the ledge he noticed an empty-cigarette packet, a book of matches, the imprints in the snow where the two men had sat waiting. Thinking of his own family, he said, " Did he have children ? "

" Two boys, back in the States." And after a pause Crail added, " I guess the U.S. Consul in Calcutta will handle it."

Passang frowned, feeling a new distaste for this American. His emotion seemed genuine enough, but he sensed in the man a kind of wariness beyond grief or shock. " The Darjeeling police," he said, " investigate and make a report."

" Oh ? " Crail's eyes met his and shifted away. " Dan and I

were great friends, you know. Planned this trip together for a long time. It's an awful jolt. I—" He cleared his throat. "Better pull myself together and get the story straight."

Passang grunted. Whatever the story, there would be publicity. A rich American falling to his death was news. The Darjeeling bazaar would hum with the name of Passang Buri, Everest Tiger, now grown old and careless. Other tourists in other years might no longer come to him. He realized this and yet he did not condemn the American. He himself had been at fault in leaving the two men alone.

"Like I told you," Crail said, "Dan got restless sitting here. Said we might as well follow you, since the steps were cut, instead of losing any more time. He was hell bent to make the top. It looked easy so we started up after you, with me in the lead and Dan about twenty feet behind on the rope. About half way up he let out a yell. There was a terrific jerk. I tried to dig in, but there was no time."

Passang scarcely heard him. He wondered how much Crail would pay him, ashamed that he should have to think of money at such a time. If it were not for the money, he thought, and the need that obligated him— Because of it he could say nothing.

"—And then," Crail went on, "it broke."

Passang blinked. "It broke?"

"Must have," Crail said. "Dan lost his footing and it snapped under the strain. He was a big man, over two hundred pounds. I couldn't see, of course. His weight pulled me flat on my face. But that's the only way it figures out."

"It broke?" Passang said incredulously. "My rope?"

"Probably," Crail said, "it was flawed."

Passang ran his fingers on the manilla line that tied him to Crail. Always he carried two, a hundred feet each. Now one was missing, the one that Danby had carried with him over the edge. He had tested them both the previous night. In all his experience he had never known of a rope break under such conditions. "The stub?" he said. "The end that was fastened to you? Where is it?"

"Oh, that." Crail made a gesture with his shoulders. "I threw it away."

The detail came back to him in a rush, confirming his earlier feel of something not quite right. He had seen a rope end, perhaps six feet long, trailing from Crail's belt. Now that, too, was missing.

"Over the drop," Crail said. "It broke off short, no good to anybody."

But Passang was already off the ledge, scrambling up the steps. Fresh sweat broke out on him as he searched along the slope. He

did not expect to find it, he half hoped that he would not find it, yet somehow knowing that he must. Then, behind a hummock, he caught the wink of a metal carabine and a length of half-inch line, almost invisible against the ice. Even before he touched it he saw one end had been cut, neatly, squarely, as though by an axe.

Below him Crail called out something indistinguishable. A chill brushed the base of his spine. Leave it here, he thought. No one will know. This is white man trouble, none of your concern. This will only bring more trouble, bad trouble. But some impulse prompted him to snatch it up and shove it inside his jacket. Deliberately he climbed down to the ledge again.

Watching him closely, Crail said, " Any luck ? "

Passang shook his head.

" What's the idea ? "

Passang hesitated. He dared not antagonize the American, nor arouse his suspicion, not with a dangerous descent before them. They were dependent on each other, at least until they crossed the glacier. Also there remained the problem of money. " New rope," he said, " isn't cheap."

Crail's mouth relaxed. " I'll buy you another one. Don't worry."

Passang swung into the lead, moving down the sharp pitch of the ridge crest. It had taken seven hours to climb this far ; normally they could make the descent in three. There would be one night in camp and the better part of another day to reach the first village. The prospect of twenty four hours alone with Crail loomed before him, grim and unavoidable.

Crail had lied. That much he knew. The rest of it, the cause of it, he tried to block from his mind, concentrating on the mechanics of the descent. It was safer not to know. After all, he was only a guide, hired by the day to haul tourists up and down mountains. He was no judge. Perhaps there was an explanation for the cut rope.

He told himself that. He wanted to believe that. But he could not block out the sound of Danby's scream.

A chill late afternoon wind had sprung up and the ice was purple in shadow. Angling down off the ridge, they came to the ledge. The surface had melted under the day's sun, not yet re-frozen, and Passang walked out on it gingerly, testing each step. Behind him Crail called, " How about a glissade ? "

Over his shoulder Passang said, " Too soft."

Crail laughed. " You don't take any chances, do you ? "

Passang ploughed on through the snow, intent on his footwork. Occasionally he stopped to catch his breath and glance back at Crail. It was slow, laborious going, and he felt a surge of anger

at this American who was in such a hurry, who would risk life to gain a few minutes.

Crail was young and strong, with a fair knowledge of snow technique, but lacking the sharp clean edge of discipline necessary to any really good climber. Even death had failed to teach him.

When they reached the rocks on the far side, Passang sank down and loosened his crampon straps. The muscles of his legs ached and a dull pain throbbed behind his eyeballs. He could still see the distant tip of Everest, crimson in the sun, a sight that momentarily relieved his depression. Some day another expedition would come, and he, Passang Buri, Everest Tiger—

"The glacier?" Crail said. "Can't we cut straight across?"

"No," Passang said. "Too many crevasses and islands. We will cross farther down."

Crail shrugged and squatted down beside him. "That police report you mentioned? Just a formality, I suppose?"

"They will ask questions, if that's what you mean."

"I've been thinking," Crail said. "It might be better if there were two witnesses, instead of one. Actually you saw as much as I did."

"I saw nothing," Passang said. "I was behind a cornice."

Crail pulled out a cigarette, lighted it and flicked away the match end over end into space. Peering at Passang through the smoke, he said, "That's the first question they'll ask: why? Why did you leave us alone? No matter what I tell them, it's bound to look like negligence on your part. This way you'll be in the clear."

Passang stared at him open-mouthed. "What way?"

"Let's face it. A lot of wild talk won't help either of us. We're in this together." Crail studied the end of his cigarette, frowning. "Why not tell our story straight, the way it happened, with one switch: *we both saw him fall.*"

Passang stiffened. "You want me to say that?"

"Nothing we can do now is going to bring Dan back. What's the difference?"

"They won't believe you," Passang blurted. "The Darjeeling police are not stupid."

As soon as he had spoken he realized his mistake. The American leaned forward, his eyes narrowed. "Why not? Why won't they believe me?"

Involuntarily Passang raised his hand to the throat of his jacket, the significance of the rope abruptly, starkly clear to him. There had been no time for Crail to dispose of the rope; he had dropped it in panic. It was the act of a frightened man, not necessarily a desperate one. But now he had to be sure. "Because," Passang

said, " rope does not break like that. It will hold up to half a ton. Any guide in these mountains knows that."

Crail's voice was flat, toneless. " You don't believe me either ? "

Passang flushed. " I know only what you tell me, sir."

Crail's mouth tightened. He was so close that Passang could smell the sweat on him, hear the laboured rhythm of his breathing. After a silence he said, " Suppose we say that Danby wasn't hooked on to a rope when he fell."

Passang looked away, groping for the words to explain something he himself could not evaluate. " If I say that I lose my reputation. And business depends on my reputation."

" So ? " Crail smiled faintly. " That's your angle ? "

Passang said nothing, waiting. The whole range stretched before him, remote and inaccessible. The valley below was sombre green, reaching to infinity. The only life visible was a lone bird, wheeling high over the glacier. Suddenly he was afraid.

" All right," Crail said. " How much do you figure your business is worth ? Say—a thousand rupees ? "

Passang gasped. " You will pay me—to take the blame ? "

" Let's say, for loss of reputation." Crail's hand slid under his coat and brought out a wallet. " Make it two thousand."

Passang moistened his lips. Two thousand rupees was more than he earned in a year. It would feed and clothe his family until better times returned. Certainly the American owed him something.

" Here." Crail thrust out a wad of bills.

Passang stared at the money and swallowed. " For you it is easy," he said. " You will go back to America. I must live here, and my children, and their children. We Sherpas have long memories."

" Count it," Crail said. " Half now and the balance later."

He doesn't trust me, Passang thought. Because I can agree now, take his money, and tell the truth later. We both know that and fear each other. " No," he said.

Crail riffled the bills with his thumb. " Down below it'll be your word against mine. Who do you think they're going to believe ? "

Passang got up, the revulsion rising in him. Crail was right. Whatever Crail said, the police would be inclined to accept simply because he had nothing apparent to gain by lying, while Passang did. But that Crail should threaten him stung him out of all caution. He jerked the stub of rope out of his jacket and held it up. " It is your word against this."

Crail stood up beside him. " So you did find it ? "

Passang said thickly, " You cut Danby's rope."

"I cut it." Crail's face was red, angrily defiant. "Sure I cut it. What else could I do?"

Passang lowered his eyes. He did not want to look at this man. All too vividly he could imagine that moment on the ice—Crail losing his head, slashing at the rope with his axe, cutting Danby loose. An accident, yes, but he had killed his friend as surely as if he had cut his throat.

"If I hadn't," Crail said, "he'd have pulled me over with him. It was Dan or both of us."

"You might have saved him."

Crail snorted. "I suppose you would have."

Passang compressed his lips. He might have done the same. Any man might have, to save himself. He did not know. Beside the enormity of the act, motive was nothing. He said, "The best thing you can do now is tell it the way it happened."

"And let the newspapers crucify me?" Crail shook his head. "They'd splash it on the front page back home, in my home town. I'd be ruined."

"Then you will understand," Passang said slowly. "Darjeeling is my home town."

Crail put out a hand as though to support himself. For an instant Passang thought he was dizzy. Then, with an explosive gesture, he flung the bills at Passang's feet. "Take it! That's all you'll get."

Passang backed away, the rope stub clutched in his fist. The rope had become the one, the only witness, his protection against Crail. Without it he would be at the man's mercy. He had not intended to use it, nor wanted to, but Crail left him no choice. "No," he said.

"Give me that rope."

Passang took another step back and stopped. Behind him the rock fell away in a sheer drop. He braced himself, facing Crail, his heart pounding.

Crail stepped towards him. "Let's have it."

"You won't touch me," Passang said. "If you do, you'll die up here."

"Try to blackmail me!"

"You can't cross the glacier alone, without me," Passang said. He said it as a statement of fact, steadying his voice with an effort, watching Crail's face. "You don't know the way. If you try, you'll go down in a crevasse. They'll never find your body either."

He saw Crail's eyes waver, shift to the tongue of ice below, then across to the far band of rocks. The American gave a shaky laugh. "You think that would stop me?"

"Yes," Passang said, "because you would be a fool to die for nothing."

Crail dropped his hands, the fury smoothing from his face as swiftly as it had come. He gave Passang a long, close look, opened his mouth and closed it.

Passang let out his breath. He felt drained, spent, a tired old man with a family to feed. He wanted nothing so much as to lie down and close his eyes, but he must get Crail into camp before dark, this American who feared humiliation more than dying itself. "You'd better pick up your money," he said.

Tight-lipped, Crail bent and scooped up the bills. Stepping past him, Passang tucked the rope stub inside his jacket, reluctant to turn his back on the man. His advantage was temporary; once across the ice they would be on even physical terms. What Crail might do then he could only guess. But one thing he knew: Crail hated enough to kill.

The footing below was treacherous, loose and rotten shale that crumbled without warning. He could hear the clatter of Crail's spikes a few paces behind, feel the tug and give of Crail's weight against his own on the rope. He forced himself to descend slowly, fighting off the urge to hurry. As long as the rope was taut he controlled Crail's movement, he was safe from surprise.

They dropped down off the rock, working past the impassable gulf of the *bergschrund*, and came to the waist of the glacier. He had climbed this route countless times, but now it seemed unfamiliar and forbidding, a shadowy jumble of seracs and fissures and islands, slate grey in the early dusk. It would be simple to drop a body into a crack. Crail would be thinking that, Crail who was so clever at arranging facts as he saw them and wished them to be seen. Crail would be watching for an opportunity.

Passang could not run; they were roped together like fish on a string. Nor could he turn on Crail now, even in self-defence. He was the guide and he was responsible. To match Crail's youth and strength he had only his skill with the tools of his trade.

Give him his opportunity, Passang thought.

He hunched forwards into the wind, shivering at the bite of it through his woollens, and swung off their course at an angle. Across the ice he caught a glimpse of their tent, less than three hundred yards away. Hot soup, a sleeping bag, good talk round the primus stove—memories of other men and other climbs came crowding back; the great ones he had known and the tourists, men who, unlike Crail, respected mountains and themselves. Then he lowered himself into the last series of crevasses that lay before the rubble of the moraine.

Signalling Crail to pay out the line, he inched ahead. A few feet beyond, the crack pinched into the span of a man's body. Below him space yawned into darkness. He halted and peered up at Crail, silhouetted against the evening sky, then across at the other wall. It was a delicate manœuvre, one that depended equally on his own timing and the security of his anchor. Holding his breath, he leaned far out and made the long step over.

Seconds later he was back on solid ice. He found purchase for his axe and made the belay for Crail. Through half-closed eyes he watched the American disappear into the crevasse, then climb out beside him.

A dozen paces beyond he paused by another fissure, wider than the last one, and squinted along its edge to check his bearings.

"This isn't the way we came this morning," Crail said.

"Safer this time of day."

"How do we tackle it?"

"Same as the last one. You anchor from above and I'll swing out on the rope." Passang looked at him intently. "Don't slip this time, or we'll both go."

Crail grunted and took his position. Passang eased into the gap, his face to the ice, groping with his boots. He found a ledge, tested it and let down his full weight. Over his shoulder he examined the far wall until he discovered what looked like a foothold a few feet farther on. Squeezing along the ledge to a point directly opposite, he manœuvred his body round so that he quartered towards it. He was sweating now and his hands felt numb.

"Ready?"

"All set."

Passang gave the rope a tug and jumped. His spikes gripped and held, and he clawed for a handhold. His fist wedged into a vertical crack, and he teetered on the edge of space, fighting for balance. Then he found the strength in himself to climb out on top and look back across the crevasse at Crail.

Crail stared at him with an expression of shocked unbelief, his axe still gripped in both hands. Slowly Passang hauled in his end of the rope, perhaps ten feet, all that was left of it, and touched the smooth, severed stub. Unsnapping it from his belt, he flung the rope down the crevasse and walked on across the ice towards camp. Crail was shouting at him, but he did not turn back.

Five minutes later he squatted in the lee of their tent, smoking his first cigarette of the day. An almost languorous sense of well-being flowed over him as he relaxed there and munched a chocolate bar from his pack. Soon he would open a tin of beef, boil up some tea and smoke another cigarette. Then he would start on the trail

to the valley. By walking fast he could be back by daybreak with help from the village, with more ropes—and a witness.

As for Crail—

Passang glanced up towards the distant tip of Everest and then out across the glacier. He could see a dark figure moving back and forth in a tight, tiny circle, as though hunting for something. Now and then Passang could hear his shouts, muffled in the wind.

Crail didn't know yet that he had marooned himself on an island of ice between two crevasses ; Crail who knew all the tricks, but not his way across Karkori Glacier. Without a rope he could not go forwards or back, unless he, too, chose to jump, and Passang doubted if he had that kind of nerve. Crail had cut the one rope that would have brought him across.

In a way, Passang supposed, he had got his man down from the summit. It would be a long cold night on the ice, but not cold enough to kill. Crail would be safe, with ample time to prepare any story he wished. Crail would keep. If not—

Passang shrugged. Now he knew. Once might be an accident, but twice was murder.

* * *

ANSWERS to MY KINGDOM FOR A HORSE on page 94

1. *The Dauphin, in Shakespeare's " King Henry the Fifth."*
2. *" The Listener," in Walter de la Mare's poem of that title.*
3. *Bellerophon, rider of Pegasus, in the ancient Greek legend of the Chimaera.*
4. *The Smugglers, in Rudyard Kipling's poem " A Smuggler's Song."*
5. *Tom Faggus, with his mare Winnie, in R. D. Blackmore's novel " Lorna Doone."*
6. *The three horses ridden by Dirck, Joris and the unnamed " he " in Robert Browning's poem " How they brought the good news from Ghent to Aix."*
7. *Lord Ronald, in Stephen Leacock's Nonsense Novel " Gertrude the Governess."*
8. *Tom Pearce, whose grey mare came to a bad end in the traditional ballad of " Widdecombe Fair."*
9. *Sir Eglamour in the famous ballad of the sixteenth century, attributed to S. Rowlands.*
10. *Lady Utterwood, in George Bernard Shaw's " Heartbreak House."*

RING TIME

I am to be married within these three days;
married past redemption

JOHN DRYDEN, 1631-1700

It was a very proper wedding. The bride was elegantly dressed; the bridesmaids were duly inferior; her father gave her away; her mother stood with salts in her hand; her aunt tried to cry; and the service was impressively read by Dr. Grant. Nothing could be objected to when it came under the discussion of the neighbourhood, except that the carriage which conveyed the bride and bridegroom to Sotherton was the same chaise which Mr. Rushworth had used for a twelvemonth before. In everything else the etiquette of the day might stand the strictest investigation. JANE AUSTEN, 1775-1817, *in a letter*

But Yesterday!

The rush and pace of business grew fiercer and faster . . . Stocks and bonds, loans and mortgages, margins and securities—here was a world of finance, and there was no room in it for the human world or the world of nature.

When the luncheon hour drew near there came a slight lull. Maxwell stood by his desk with his hands full of telegrams and memoranda, with a fountain pen over his right ear and his hair hanging in disorderly strings over his forehead . . .

"By George, I'll do it now," said Maxwell, half aloud. "I'll ask her now. I wonder I didn't do it long ago."

He dashed into the inner office . . . He charged upon the desk of the stenographer.

She looked up at him with a smile. A soft pink crept over her cheek, and her eyes were kind and frank. Maxwell leaned one elbow on her desk.

"Miss Leslie," he began hurriedly, "I have but a moment to spare. I want to say something in that moment. Will you be my wife? I haven't had time to make love to you in the ordinary way, but I really do love you. Talk quick, please—those fellows are clubbing the stuffing out of Union Pacific."

"Oh, what are you talking about?" exclaimed the young lady.

"Don't you understand?" said Maxwell restively. "I want you to marry me. I love you, Miss Leslie. They're calling me for the 'phone now . . . Won't you, Miss Leslie?"

The stenographer acted very queerly. At first she seemed

overcome with amazement; then tears flowed from her wondering eyes; and then she smiled sunnily through them, and one of her arms slid tenderly about the broker's neck.

"I know now," she said softly. "It's this old business that has driven everything else out of your head for the time. Don't you remember, Harvey? We were married last evening at eight o'clock in the Little Church Around the Corner."

O. HENRY, 1862-1910, *The Romance of a Busy Broker*

Romani Wedding

In the green chapel of the forest, my dark-eyed Zetti and I were married this morning over a branch of the yellow broom.

Our parson, the ringdove, spake the word: "Take her, for she is thine." Sweetly the choir of birds chanted our wedding hymn.

On the beechen book beside us we inscribed our names. Curst be the wretch who defaces that register!

Now, clasped heart to heart, we rest together, Zetti and I, beneath the hedge, while upon us the whitethorn sprinkles his shower of confetti.

JOHN SAMPSON, *Romani Poems*

No Lye

I knewe a Priest (this is a true tale that I tell you, and no Lye) whiche when any of his parishioners should be maryed, woulde take his Backe-pype, and go fetche theym to the Churche, playnge sweetlye afore them, and then would he laye his Instrument handsomely upon the Aultare, tyll he had maryed them and sayd Masse. Which thyng being done, he would gentillye bringe them home agayne with Backe-pype. Was not this Priest a true Ministrell, thynke ye?

Veron's Hunting of Purgatory to Death, 1561

A Thorny Plesure

In som Countries the Bride is crowned by the Matrons with a Garland of Prickles, and so delivered unto her Husband that he might know he hath tied himself to a thorny plesure . . .

STEPHEN GOSSON, 1554-1624, *Ephemerides of Phialo*

Wedding in Borneo

On one of his vacations at home at Kampong Pau Arusap married Kuta . . . The favourable half moon, which in its gentle swelling symbolized pregnancy, swung in the sky, and the month was ripe for the wedding . . .

The ceremonial jars of rice beer for the wedding guests were filled, the fowls were killed and prepared, the preserved and rotted fish and meat were dug up and brought forth in little bamboo containers. The drinking teams, composed of the friends of the bride versus the friends of the groom, sucked thirstily upon the bamboo drinking-reeds placed in the beer jars until, from exhaustion and repletion, neither side was able to arise to declare a victory.

Then was the time for Kuta, with her twenty strings of beads about her throat, the gift of the bridegroom to his bride, to come forward and meet Arusap in the final rite which was to be symbolic of their union, the eating of rice from the same plate and the drinking of rice beer from the same jar together. The pale bisque of her body shone in the orange light of the oil flames, and the brilliant beads swung on her bare, full breasts. The delicate moon-shaped face with the flat cheekbones was close to Arusap's as their heads met over the *tapai* jar.

As her full-lipped mouth sucked on the bamboo reed she raised luminous eyes to his, then hastily, modestly, looked away. But those oblique eyes with the dark brown pupils liquid against a blue-white iris made Arusap turn a deeper red than did the rice beer.

AGNES NEWTON KEITH, *Land Below the Wind*

Bridal Night

What mean'st thou Bride, this companie to keep ?
To sit up, till thou faine wouldst sleep ?
Thou maist not, when thou art laid, doe so.
Thy selfe must to him a new banquet grow,
And you must entertaine
And doe all this daies dances o'r againe . . .
Therefore thou maist, faire Bride, to bed depart,
Thou art not gone, being gone ; where e'r thou art,
Thou leav'st in him thy watchfull eyes, in him thy loving heart.

JOHN DONNE, 1572-1631, *Epithalamion*

Sufficient Unto The Day—

All the women we need are inside, said the bridegroom, and closed the door on the bride . . .

THEOCRITUS, *Third Century B.C.*

ORCHID HOUSE

**It was like a mirage, that far off valley—
for ever out of reach**

by KATHRYN GRONDAHL

THE scream was thin and sharp. It cut the hot, still morning and struck into her bedroom as if a long knife had been thrown, and Hilda came awake as frightened as though the imaginary blade had narrowly missed her.

The vibrations of the cry rippled along her startled mind, and it was not the echo of a nightmare. She knew such a scream meant pain, not a dog kicked but a human being hurt.

With a catch of breath, she swept back the mosquito netting and ran out on to the balcony, overturning a slim orchid vase on the tea table in her confused urgency. She paused and, in righting the fallen vase, she seemed to right her own senses, too, and her waking fright calmed. She realized, belatedly, that the scream had not come from the direction of Alan's room.

The scream had risen outside the compound, from beyond the high stockade of split bamboo, the dividing barrier between her gardens and the paddy fields. She went to her balcony rail. All the flat view, green miles of it, striped by canals, lay tranquil. Only a herd of water buffaloes moved heavily through the ground mist, wet hides shining, curved horns swinging.

She could feel the damp of the railing through her nightgown as she leaned, full of relief that the scream had been alien. It wasn't Alan. I scare easily, she thought, I scare much too easily.

She bent her head, pressing her fingers to her eyes. One of her long, night-time plaits swung out to touch the claw-flowered vine that wrapped the pillar, and a sprinkle of dew fell on her arm.

It was a bad awakening. No matter how shallow her sleep had been, she regretted its loss. More and more, sleep was hard to get. And who had screamed and why ? As she listened, she now heard only the usual sounds—bird chirp, chatter of the gibbon in the rain tree, tinkle of a bicycle bell in the lane.

She looked out over the familiar landscape again. Canals, smooth silver bands ; rice fields, patch after patch of clearest green ; scattered clumps of trees, each an island of shade half-hiding a rice

farmer's roof; line of feathery casuarina; a wooden bridge; the pronged outline of a Siamese temple. Trees and temple made thrusts above the wide horizon, but they were only token claims, for the sky was immense. It rose unpatterned, early blue with a film of grey.

Then, suddenly, small but clearly visible, four children came running through the wet, tufted grasses of the corner pasture. She knew who they were. They had names like Nit and Noy, Pang and Puk and lived in a dishevelled palm-thatched hut at the field's edge. The children ran headlong, naked and brown, in uneven flight through the green, scrawny as plucked snipe.

Why did the children run, she wondered tiredly, and was it their mother who had screamed? They had a bird-boned mother, always draped in a white camisole blouse, wound in a faded black skirt, her face very shy and small under a great straw hat. Every morning she went barefoot down the lane with a tray of greyish rice cakes to sell.

Her wondering grew idle. If something had happened, if there was anything she could do about it, Xuan would tell her.

The Siamese cat leapt to the railing beside her, beautiful with poise and contrast, its fur the colour of cream with chocolate markings. She blinked blue eyes at Hilda, lifted her dark mask, and made a rasping plaint.

"How are you, Ying?" She stroked the crisp fur, but the cat crouched away, jumped down, and returned to the bedroom in a high-legged walk. Hilda followed to the big wardrobe, the door of which was propped partly open. On the lowest shelf, in a nest lined with an old silk nightgown, were Ying's three kittens. With one finger Hilda stroked the mites—white, blind, one astraddle the other two.

Ying tongued them over roughly, impatiently, and then hurried to the door and waited. Hilda opened it narrowly, peering to see if Chao, the big male cat, was lurking in the hall, waiting to rush through the opened door.

The hall was all quiet shadows. "Go and eat your fish and then have a walk," she told Ying. "I'll guard the triplets."

All day yesterday big Chao had prowled the hall, a restless, threatening, thwarted killer, a sullen exile. She closed the bedroom door firmly again.

She leaned against the wall for a moment. Even at this early hour it was hot, and the air clung like an extra garment. The finest tendril on the balcony vine curled motionless.

She bathed quietly, not wanting to disturb Drake in the room beyond, then dressed in her usual morning clothes, a blouse, Chinese trousers, and straw slippers. Already the bath coolness was

gone from her skin, and she moved her arms slowly as she pinned up her hair.

Her reflected face was pale as matting. You must eat more, she told the telltale face, keep deliberately fit and braced. When Alan is better, you must start riding with him at the Club again.

She padded lightly down the wide, tiled balcony, veering to straighten some magazines on the long table, to pick a withered leaf from one of the oleanders, which grew in spaced porcelain jars, and came to the doorway of Alan's room.

He was still asleep, which was good—for he needed all the rest he could get. She took off her slippers and entered on soundless feet.

A model plane lay on top of the chest like a brooding fowl. On the corner of the desk, his French grammar and reader were stacked, the pages of written work folded between them, ready for her to correct. Between stone book ends were his other school books, Chinese history, marine biology, Oxford Book of Verse, a general botany. It's a hotchpotch course I give him, she thought ruefully, and put her hand on the books in a sort of apology.

In the middle of a litter of rubber bands, kite strings, comics, shells, and paint pots, his precious silver cup held the honour of centre position, but it was badly tarnished. Alan had won it last autumn in the children's gymkhana at the Riding Club, and Hilda half smiled to see that the precious cup now held a multi-coloured bouquet of chewed pencils.

She went to the bed and peered through the netting at her son. The boy lay flung out, and he looked stick-thin, angular as a kapok tree. His bleached hair was sweat darkened along the hairline, and there was a rash of prickly heat, bright as raspberries, across his chest. His ribs showed plainly and the seersucker pyjamas clung damply about his thin young frame.

She looked at him with a pang, and thought, he's exhausted with growing and this bout of dengue fever. He's recovering strength too slowly. He should be back home, in a regular school among other boys, far away from the uneasy cast of Drake's shadow.

I am failing him, she thought helplessly. It's like a cage, and I am without cunning to pick the lock, or strength to smash it.

She looked at the boy's lax face with desperate tenderness, the paired arcs of thick dark lashes, the long sun-scorched nose, the short upper lip. If only he looked less like his father it might have been easier for Drake—and for all of them.

She turned sharply away and went back on to the balcony, where morning tea was waiting. She sat, elbows on knees holding the fragile teacup with both hands. Below the lawn spread plushly, full

of shimmer, and the bushes of gardenia, hibiscus, and ixora were brilliant, still and flat as a photograph.

For me, at least, there has been this garden to plan for, to work in, since Drake so fully approved. It enhances his setting. He can take guests to the orchid house, nod his handsome head at the mossy baskets of exquisite blossoms. "I married a rancher's daughter, you know. She has a green thumb."

Chao was stretched on the low wall of the pool, following a grasshopper with his eyes, and Ying lay near him, rhythmically waving her tail. From the rain tree, the chained and lonely gibbon watched them, his sad, depraved little face intent between bushy white sidewhiskers. When the gibbon broke into excited gibberish and came scuttling down the tree to his chain's length, Hilda knew Xuan was coming.

Xuan stood square under the tree, and the sinews of his long arms and bandy legs were all cords and knots. He wore baggy patched shorts and a frayed, peaked coolie hat. Together, he and the gibbon looked almost comic.

Yet so often when she was talking with Xuan, looking into his serene and venerable face, she felt she was talking with Bruce, Alan's grandfather. There was a bright saintliness about them both.

Xuan released himself from the gibbon's embrace, gave him a banana, then moved to the end of the garden and unlocked the orchid house.

The orchid house lay long, under the shade of the mango trees. It was bricked hip high, the roof and the remainder of the walls a thatch of narrow teak laths. Xuan came out with a broom of blunted spines and began to sweep the lawn, while the gibbon watched and swung, making disrespectful noises. Xuan answered him from time to time with gentle insults in Siamese, Annamese, and French.

Xuan was an old Annamite refugee who had turned up when she was planning the orchid house. Twice Hilda had been robbed of valuable plants, so Drake had agreed to the building. Xuan had brought no references. It was perhaps true that he'd come over the French Indo-China border illegally, that he had no papers, but she had never asked, for when he had spoken to her in French, neat Jesuit-school French, she had hired him with delight, and now, after three years, she still blessed her luck.

Alan leaned on Xuan, too. She would hear the boy's treble down there, practising simple French. *Combien de plantes avez-vous là?* and Xuan's low reply, *Six, mon enfant, une demi-douzaine.* Xuan could also carve and make kites.

She had just finished her tea when the scream came again. Hilda sprang up, a jerked response to the raw sound. Scream mounted on

scream, shocking the hushed torpor of the morning. On hunting trips in the jungle she had heard similar sounds of trapped terror. She could feel her own breath coming quickly. It must be that Siamese woman. She called to Xuan, but he had already dropped his broom and was heading for the gates.

The screams had wakened Alan, and he came through his doorway, sticky with sleep, blinking.

" What's going on, for Pete's sake ? " His eyes were as sapphire as Ying's. " Sounds as if somebody's getting killed."

" Xuan's gone to find out." Hilda's attention was all for the boy now. She had put her hand to his brow. It was warm, but not fevered, and she kissed him. " Good morning."

" Good morning, Madame." He made a little mock bow and stood grinning, gawky, tousled and appealing, scratching a bite on one bony ankle with the toes of his other foot. " What day is this, anyway ? "

It seemed an effort to remember. " Friday. Music lesson's at eight. I'll send some Java lilies with you." Twice a week he had a piano lesson from her friend, Margriet ter Gast. " Now run and shower and don't forget to powder your prickly heat."

Xuan was returning, returning very soon she thought, coming through the door in the gates, and she had leaned over the rail to call out to him when she heard the sharp double knock on the bedroom door. She turned abruptly and seated herself on the far side of the tea table. There was irony in Drake's knock, Hilda thought ; it suggested she could refuse him entrance.

Drake strode through the bedroom towards the balcony. He was a block-shouldered man and, in his plum-silk robe with the fine Peking embroidery, he looked rather like a popular boxer coming into the ring. But his long, fine face, its darkness doubled by suntan was not a boxer's.

He sat down, flexing his hairy muscular legs, and watched Hilda pour his tea. " What was all the caterwauling about ? " he asked, without real curiosity. Hilda simply shook her head and offered him his cup.

He looked down into the clear tea for a moment, then tested it with a sip. Apparently its strength and heat were good enough, so he leaned back. Below, she could hear the rough sweep of Xuan's broom, and the gibbon rattling its chain.

Drake drew her attention to himself. " Excellent dinner last night and your flower arrangements were lovely as usual." His soft voice was clipped to plushness, like the lawn.

" You looked as exquisite as a white orchid yourself." His personal compliments were always carefully extravagant and

embarrassing to her, even in private, as he knew very well.

"Marshfield thought you were delightful."

"Mr. Marshfield is very kind."

"I thought you found him charming." Drake bent over his teacup. "Reminds you of Roger, doesn't he?"

"No." Hilda almost whispered it. Mr. Marshfield had *not* reminded her of Roger. Only now that Drake mentioned it could she see a faint, absurdly tenuous resemblance to her first husband in Marshfield's light, crisp hair and dark-lashed eyes.

She should be used to this, yet it always caught her with disbelief, though she had ceased to protest long ago. It was Drake who kept Roger alive in her memory, not she. Even so, she had no sorrow left for Roger. In her memory, he had become the boy she'd known on the summer ranch when he was Alan's age, rather than Alan's father. Dead for seven years, he belonged to her childhood, while she herself was thirty one now.

"I've set up a tiger hunt for Marshfield," Drake was telling her almost idly. "We'll leave about noon today, fly down to Sonarpur, and return late Monday." He paused, seeming to consider. "There's no need for you to come along, unless you wish."

She heard the faint stress on the last word and understood. He did not want her to be on this party with Marshfield.

"Then I'll stay here," she said, but not too quickly. She dreaded the jungle trips and was relieved that it had been so easy. Especially relieved because she did not want to leave Alan when he wasn't well.

She hoped she had avoided a scene. She tried to think back on last night's dinner party, but it seemed indistinguishable from any other. Had she shown Marshfield any special attention? Yes, she thought tensely, perhaps you could call it that, and Drake would. She had taken his guest out on the terrace to show him the white ginger that was coming into bloom, unfolding petal by petal with special fragrance.

Hilda found she was rubbing her wrist, the one that had been broken, and she checked herself. It's becoming a nervous habit, she thought, but I am nervous. I cannot bear it this morning if Drake makes a scene.

In the beginning I had simple faith that Drake's moods were things that love could lift. But it needed more than love; it needed a braver and wiser woman. I was the wrong woman, and there wasn't a chance and never has been. I cannot win; I can only be wary. Hate is like an orchid, an exquisite parasite. Even the smallest thread of the plant will grow a new plant, if you take good care. Keep it in shadow, keep it in special moss.

She glanced at Drake, looking for a trouble sign, but his jaw was relaxed, almost gentle. She remembered her schoolgirl tremor on first seeing that strong, fine profile, when Roger had brought his dark, exciting cousin to stay at the ranch once long ago. She had adored him wistfully, and she still remembered all her young enchantment and misery.

Roger and his sister Janet had been awed by his worldliness, too. He was full of such superior differences. He had been everywhere, had lived, with his mother, all over the world, gathering charm and experience, while they stayed dull and childish with just the same old school in winter, same old ranch in summer.

It was the next winter that she'd had special tutoring in French and had really manicured her nails. There had been two precious postcards from Drake, one from Morocco, another from Hong Kong, and then the long silence.

She knew now, with adult focus, what a miserable childhood he'd had, lonely, neglected, rootless, trailing after the rich, erratic, and somehow mysterious mother who had divorced Roger's uncle. But we thought he lived in a charmed world, all freedom and elegance, her mind looked back. We never dreamed how bitterly he envied Roger, but she knew now how deep it went.

His resentment of Roger, even a dead Roger, was deep as sickness, with many roots; resentment of the warm spiritual security of Roger's family and the comforting place in that family his mother had denied him. What had he hoped to capture in marrying Roger's widow, in fathering Roger's son?

"Why do you want to keep me here?" she asked, and the suddenness surprised Drake, too, and for a fraction of a second his face looked so vulnerable that she was almost sorry, but he countered drily:

"And why should you want to leave? Have you another husband in mind? Marshfield, for instance?"

Hilda pushed at her hair. It was all quite hopeless. It is I who am making a useless scene, she thought, but she went on heedlessly. "But it's wrong, Drake. Bad and *twisted.*" She took a deep quavering breath. "And bad for Alan. How can you take it out on a child? He's really ill, Drake. Please let me take him home, or at least send him."

Drake's face had frozen, and she knew she was being terribly foolish, but her foolishness was somehow part of the morning's tension, the screams, Alan's illness, the heat. Drake made no answer, just waited.

Hilda made a direct plea. "Will you let Alan go?"

"Where?" he asked lightly.

It was just a sorry game. " To his grandfather."

Drake smiled, almost indulgently. " What more can you ask for Alan than this ? He lives in luxury." His slight gesture included the carved table, the silver tea service, the high glaze of the floor tiles. " And you couldn't impose on Roger's father, an ageing man on a parson's pension."

Drake kept his smile. He likes this, Hilda knew, likes having me roused, pleading. She sat back, and let go. She'd had no real hope. It was true Bruce had nothing but his pension. Without money from Drake, she was helpless. She had nothing herself—nothing but a ranch, and that couldn't be counted.

" Too bad both your families were so improvident—or shall we say, impractical." Drake was pleasantly conversational. " That ranch of your father's, miles from nowhere, was hardly a paying investment."

It was never meant to pay in money, thought Hilda. It was for Father's health, for summers out of his classroom working out of doors, a setting for mother to paint, a playground for the children, a place for friends to come. " A beautiful world," she spoke to herself.

She was surprised to hear Drake agree. " Yes, beautiful place. I remember the month I spent there, the trails, the pool, the blue-green valleys. That was the first time I saw you. You were sixteen then, wearing a blue sweater, coming through the trees. There was an old donkey following you."

So he remembered. That donkey was old Gordo, overfed, under-foot, but cherished. But it cannot be true that he remembers me with tenderness.

His eyes were angry. " I decided then to marry you, but by the time I got back it was too late."

It was always too late, thought Hilda. When his mother died, he was free to return, but had he truly returned to find her ? Didn't he decide he wanted her only when he found she was Roger's ?

His teacup was empty, and she wished he would go. He rose, but only to come round the table. Hilda was watchful, but he passed her chair and leaned against the railing, facing her. His silk robe was full of lights.

" Your ranch has two valleys, I remember," he said unexpectedly. " Settlers' Valley up above."

Hilda nodded, surprised and vaguely puzzled. Then she knew why. How *could* Drake remember ? Father didn't buy the upper valley until much later, the year Roger and I were married.

" High Valley was added long after you were there." There was a question in her voice.

There was sharpness in his when he answered. " Then you must have told me about it, Hilda. I was sure I remembered Settlers' Valley."

What did it matter ? One valley, two valleys, a world she'd never have again. A ranch miles from nowhere, impracticable, unsaleable even. The Andersens kept an eye on it during the winter. Janet, Roger's sister, took her children there for the summer and paid the taxes in return.

She felt a great surge of longing for the sight of it, but determinedly put it down. Home Valley, High Valley—why had Drake called it *Settlers'* Valley ? That was the map name for it, a name she'd almost forgotten, a name she would never have used.

She looked at Drake wonderingly, but he broke up her puzzle abruptly. He reached in his pocket and tossed a letter on the table. " I forgot to give you this yesterday."

Hilda saw it was a letter from an old schoolfriend, saw that it had been opened. She had known he read her post, her simple innocuous letters, but this morning he'd not even resealed the flap and she felt sick to see it. It was like a flat and sure admission, the prisoner's mail is censored. She met his gaze briefly and put her hand over her eyes.

" You haven't heard from Roger's father or sister for some time." Never his Uncle Bruce or Cousin Janet, always *Roger's* father, *Roger's* sister.

" No," she lied. He has probably guessed, she thought, with a small tingle of alarm. She wondered what Bruce and Janet thought, addressing letters to her in care of Madame ter Gast. It was less underhanded than protective. Bruce's affectionate letters of family-and-friends gossip always made trouble. Real trouble, sometimes.

He eyed her speculatively. " Are you quite sure, Hilda ? " he asked gently, and before she could answer, he went on, slowly.

" You know, I think I'll take Alan with me on this tiger hunt. Time he learned to shoot better. We don't want him coddled with too much music and flowers."

Hilda did not speak. So this is what I've done, she thought ; this is the punishment I've earned this morning. How can Alan stand it, the miles of uneven walking through jungle scrub, the irregular meals, exhaustion, insects.

" Just see that the driver has Alan and all the gear at the aerodrome by eleven thirty."

She did not look up. She began to rub again the wrist that had been broken.

There was a cloister dimness in the orchid house ; the light that slipped between the laths was further filtered by the boughs of the

mango trees above it. A coolness rose from the wetted moss and foliage, and the two bricked aisles that ran the length were wet too.

At the sides and between the narrow walks, the clay pots were set thickly, row on row of varied ferns, thick begonias, stiff anthuriums, African violets among flannel leaves. At waist level, in wooden baskets of black moss hung from crosspoles, the orchids grew.

The little hybrid orchids sprayed up in pink, mauve and red purple, but the rest, the big cattleyas, held buds only. She had cut all the full blooms for last night's dinner party.

At the end was a small platform, and Chao was curled there looking like a huge browned biscuit with burnt edges. Hilda sat down beside the cat, who was so secure in his lordship that he only opened one eye. She pulled her knees up, the wide silk of her trousers cascading round her, and put her head down. She felt drained, beaten, and sat utterly still, ceasing to think.

She did not know Xuan was there until he spoke. He had filled a glass from the thermos jug of water.

"The heat is too much," he observed. "Madame needs a change."

She sipped the water, wet her handkerchief and moistened her temples. She looked at the elderly little gardener for a moment, almost unseeing, then remembered—and remembering was almost painful, like blood coming back into a frozen place.

"Xuán, why was she screaming this morning?"

"The Siamese woman?" He sighed. "Her husband is back. He has been in prison a long time and now he is out again."

"But why would he beat her?" Why cruelty in such a simple pattern of living?

"Because she was unfaithful perhaps. More likely, because she had no money to give him."

"Terrible."

"Perhaps," Xuan shrugged. "But she expects it, accepts it."

And I have come to expect and accept too.

"One can do nothing, Madame." He spoke with finality. "She is free to run away if she chooses." With four children and no money?

But Xuan dismissed the domestic violence in the field hut. "Would Madame care to sell any of the Pompadour roots? I have been approached." He made it sound discreet, like a little deal in opium. "He would buy the mother orchids, too, but I told him Madame might not consider."

She smiled. "No, but make him a gift of the tiny ones." Then she added, wise to Xuan's worth, "Was that person who approached you also wishing to buy my excellent gardener?"

Xuan's black eyes disappeared when he smiled, like round seeds

slipping back in the pod of eyelid. "I prefer to stay with you, Madame, until you leave."

She stared down at the pattern of silk on her knees, a lily, a leaf. "Do you think I will ever leave?"

The leathery gnome face went blank. "It is time." He turned away to the potting shelf.

It is time. This orchid house has seemed a sanctuary, but that's a false name. I am trapped here; the laths could be steel. There's a gibbon in the rain tree, another captive in the orchid house. And there's Alan, the hostage.

She walked slowly down the brick aisle, across the brilliant grass, the burning terrace, and the sweat gathered in drops between her breasts, behind her knees. How can I think clearly? she cried, defending herself. How can I think at all in this heat? She felt she was pushing against the thick air, displacing it like heavy water. She came into the hall.

The door of Drake's study was open, the blinds drawn. She stepped into the shadows and leaned tremblingly on his desk. I have never fainted in my life, she thought, but perhaps this is it. She tried to think of something to cling to, something to hold her up.

Something icy like the numbing shock of the pool, an hour's ride on the trail above High Valley, rocklined, deep as a great well and clearer, and after climbing up to lie on a boulder, the flesh felt cold and firm as a trout's. Something menthol, something sharply aromatic like eucalyptus pods, scattered under the ragged trees in the foothills, handfuls of loose greened silver.

And there was the smell of frost. Rime on the stone, rime on the laurel. The whinny of horses, reverberating; plangent jingle bells on the clear, clear air. The frost would be almost gone by now, she remembered suddenly, but the mornings would still be cool.

It was like a mirage and as heartbreaking. It was a *mirage*, for even if she and Alan were carried there by magic, it would still be out of reach. On a ranch miles from nowhere, how could a woman and an eleven year old boy manage without money? It was like a stalled gramophone needle. The money. The money.

She heard the car, the rumble as it turned into their lane, bringing Alan home from his lesson with Margriet. She stared into the hall where all the gear and supplies for the hunting trip were stacked and ready, Alan's overcoat on top, his rifle-case leaning against Drake's.

Alan must a-hunting go, whether his mother would let him or no, she thought ridiculously, almost hysterically. Tiger, tiger, burning bright. Then she pushed at her hair, straightened her belt, hurried across the hall, past the rifles, down the drive to the gates. She pulled the gates wide and stepped out. The glittering car was a

hundred feet away, crunching and scattering slate pebbles as it came.

The naked Siamese children were not in the lane—were they still hiding in the fields ?—but she saw the man at once. He was squatting on his haunches in the long grass like an animal. The width of the lane separated them, but she drew back. His face, brown and feral, was on hers, intent as though gauging the movement of prey. She saw the black bristles of his cropped hair, his naked slippery torso, the patched faded shorts, the splayed toes among the grass stems.

He was not a hawker. There were no wares, no yoke baskets beside him. He was simply squatting, motionless as a carved, stained wood, primitive talisman, malevolent, and she guessed who he was.

She stepped aside as the car turned into the drive. Then, urgently, not waiting for the yard coolie, she shut the gates against the disquieting sight of him.

Alan was still in the car. A healthy child would have leapt out by now, she thought with despair, bounding, exuberant, but Alan came out slowly, carefully, like an old man, or an invalid.

He was pale and had a moustache of sweat drops. In this hot light, his pallor had a fragile transparency, like a teacup. She took him by the shoulders, but gently.

" You *can't* go on that tiger hunt. I can't let you ! " She spoke desperately.

" Aw, Hildy," he patted her arm in a semi-adult way. " Don't worry so ! I'll be all right. I'd jolly well better be."

" Not this time."

He knows I'm afraid, knows I'm almost licked. But I'm not, I won't be. What more can Drake do that he hasn't done ? What worse than this, forcing a sick child on a jungle trip ? Wrist bones mend, so do other things. She put her arm round him, resisting the wish to pick him up and carry him into the house.

Firmly, she pulled Alan's coat down from the heap, dragged it away, set the rifle aside. Then she called the driver.

" Load these in the car." She was surprised at her own crispness. She pointed to the remaining heap, " and take them to the Master at the aerodrome."

Tell him no more, and when Drake demands to know where Alan is the driver will be sincerely bewildered. With Marshfield there, the important client, there won't be much that Drake can do.

Alan watched her with worry. " Mother, are you sure—? "

She nodded, her lips thin. She came and sat beside him, holding herself tight. There'd be three days' respite, anyway.

" Did you have a good lesson, darling ? "

" Not too good." He was looking at her with wide frightened eyes. He leaned towards her. " Listen, Mother, I—"

"No." She pushed him firmly back against the cushion. "Did Margriet like the flowers?" She could hear the car starting.

"Yes, she's coming to see you tomorrow, and she sent this." He handed her a long envelope.

The car rolled down the drive and Hilda sighed. It was done. She began to open the envelope from Margriet, knowing there'd be a letter from Bruce or Janet inside.

The letter had been from Bruce, a page of tiny ministerial handwriting—cramped, he always said, from a lifetime of sermon notes and thrift. The letter was on the balcony tea table now, and in the starlight she could see its white oblong overlapping the other letter Drake had tossed there this morning.

She knew it was past midnight because the vine on the pillar had let go its fragrance, and always at about that hour the green clawlike flowers opened. She lay back sleeplessly on the chaise-longue, wrapped in a long robe to protect herself against the mosquitoes.

From time to time she went down to Alan's room. His fever was low and he was sleeping deeply now; the sedative had taken hold.

Sentences from Bruce's letter hung about her as heavily as the vine fragrance. They offered a gift, the gift she wanted. They made the mirage real if she could only reach it.

"*We all drove up to the ranch last weekend, a rough trip, but worth it. The place has weathered the winter well enough, though the roof needs repairing. The orchards are in good condition, Andersen assures me, and the walnut trees looked magnificent. They have begun the new highway out of the city and, as you know, it will increase property values a lot.*"

As you know. But I hadn't known a thing about it.

"*I told Andersen I doubted if you would sell Home Valley, knowing how you feel about the place, my dear. I'm sure you could sell easily and profitably if you wish, or get a full-time tenant. Whatever you decide, I might spend the summer there and with one of the Andersen boys to help, get the place in good shape. I wish you would come home on leave. I shan't know my only grandson.*"

She had to get home.

Bruce understands how I feel about it; some important part of me belongs there. And as for a tenant, the tenant should be me and Alan and Bruce, too. With the new highway, the chances of making the ranch pay would be hopeful. Not much, but enough, and how desperately I would work at it!

But where was the money to get there with, she asked herself, with despair, the money to begin? Bruce has nothing, nor Janet, and how could I borrow from Margriet unless I am absolutely sure I could repay, and quickly.

Could you go to a bank and say: Sir, I have this small ranch. My child likes horses and has won a cup. His grandfather is retired from tilling the Lord's vineyard and will now till mine. I myself am an ex-orchid grower with a green thumb.

What money *was* there? Xuan could sell the orchids. The three Madame Pompadour plants might fetch about seventy five dollars each. The anthurium were special, and the rest would bring something, too. Her pearls weren't too good, and there was her platinum wedding ring. All the valuable jewellery Drake had bought was shrewdly locked away. That jewellery is not mine, anyway; it is just a part of the setting Drake provides, and I wouldn't touch it, she thought. There were her books, Alan's rifle and silver cup.

She wanted to laugh. It was like Janet and her, in their schooldays, trying to collect empty milk and soft drink bottles to raise money for theatre tickets.

No, she'd have to sell the ranch. Secretly and as soon as possible and in a few months she and Alan could be gone from here. What they would do then, how she would manage when the sale price was spent was something to face later. Alan came first. The ranch would have to go.

There was an ominous hissing from the bedroom, and then a low growl, and she rose, wondering.

"Something wrong, Ying?"

There was, for in the starlight she could see the big pale outline of Chao crouched at the partly open door of the wardrobe. With a rush Hilda swept the heavy cat up under her arm.

"How did you get in?" She scolded in puzzlement. "I locked you out myself, and you couldn't have climbed the vine, you lazy tub!"

She embraced the struggling cat firmly and went quickly, lightly down the stairs to put him out. She crossed the dark hall and suddenly, terrifyingly, she saw that the door leading on to the terrace was standing wide open.

She leapt to the light switch and as she switched it on, she whirled, holding the cat against her as if it were a shield.

He was there, and she was not surprised to see him, the wife-beater, the gaol-bird, the silent, menacing figure that she had seen that morning crouching in the grass across the lane. She let Chao slide, saw him bolt out of the door, tail fluffed.

The man was standing in the door of Drake's study, very still, again the stained, carved talisman.

They stared at each other in silence, and then with cold terror she saw that he was moving—slowly, silently, and savagely—towards her. She knew that if she screamed, no servant would come in time.

She knew she should run, that she was standing by the open door, the door he must escape through, but she stood still, almost fascinated.

It was when she saw the knife in his hand that she moved, shrank back in reflex, and almost stumbled over Alan's overcoat. She threw back her hand, and it closed on the rifle case on the top of the pile behind her.

Then she waited, coldly, almost calmly. She'd seen a tiger stalk, seen him gather to spring. She knew the muscular movements of her own cats, and when she saw the tension in his limbs, the swift crouch, she swung the rifle case out and up, felt the end of the case meet his rush halfway, felt the jar along her arm as it struck under his jaw.

He staggered, his head thrown back, and as he slipped, he fell against the staircase.

She knew that he was only stunned, knew she should strike him again, that she could strike to kill across the base of his skull.

She stared down at him. The brown face was turned towards her, the eyes shut, the mouth soft and parted, and she saw that he was really quite young. He gave a little sigh of pain. He was no longer an animal now, but a person. A thieving, murderous one, but she knew she would not be able to strike him again.

She picked up the knife and saw with fascination how long it was, the hone on the curve, and as she looked over its edge, she saw the man's eyes slowly open, black with hate. Then she screamed, a scream as sharp and terrified and shocking as those of the morning.

When Xuan came she was standing there alone, still holding the knife in her hand.

"He went out of the door," she told him and then she handed the weapon to Xuan.

" Madame is very brave." He tested the heft, his eyes bright.

" Brave ? " The word seemed quite funny. " I'm a fool. I couldn't bear to hurt him. I hate pain. I just stood there with the knife ! "

" You must sit down." He took her arm and led her to a chair. " I will call the police."

" Don't, Xuan. He'll be far away." She wanted no more of this, no disturbance. " He won't come back, and that's all we want, isn't it ? You tell his wife and children."

They should be glad, the little, bruised, bird-boned woman and the fleeing children.

" But perhaps he has robbed the house ? "

" I doubt it." She felt steady now. " He had nothing in his hands when he ran out."

She rose and turned on the lamp in Drake's study. Doors to the cabinet had been prized open, the drawer of Drake's desk jerked wide. She saw the wastepaper basket was filled with plunder, Drake's silver cigarette box and lighter, fountain pen, crocodile writing case, the velvet jewel boxes from the cabinet. She looked down on the scattered papers on the desk and reached out.

It was a letter to her, one she'd never received. "*My dear Hildy,*"—typewritten on a very old machine. And at the bottom it said, "*With kindest regards from your old friend and neighbour, Hank Andersen.*"

But why had Drake kept this letter from her? The ranch, of course. There must be something about the ranch he didn't want her to know.

She began to read. "*With the new highway being finished this summer, the boys and me want to increase the stock. Settlers' Valley is good pasture, and I hope you're willing, since your Dad never used it for much and it's little use to your place. I'd be willing to make you a good fair price.*" She saw the amount and with it her heart seemed to settle into place. It was no mirage. It was all real.

The letter was less than a week old. A cable would do it. She could borrow the fare from Margriet, with certain knowledge she could repay it on arrival home.

Xuan's solicitous eyes were on her, and she smiled at him. "Alan and I will fly home on Monday morning. Sunday, if possible. Will you sell the orchids for me and you? Xuan, your new job—will it be good?"

"Yes, but I will miss Madame and the boy with all my heart."

She thought she would cry. She went over and hugged him. "You've been such an angel." She said it in English, but it didn't matter. His smile had wrinkled his face up, hidden his eyes in slits, and she knew he understood.

Upstairs Alan was breathing deeply and evenly. Hilda curled up at the foot of his bed and was soon asleep, just as deeply and dreamlessly.

* * *

MAXIMUM EFFORT

To do each day two things one dislikes is a precept I have followed scrupulously: every day I have got up and I have gone to bed.

SOMERSET MAUGHAM

DOLORES

The worst washerwoman in the world had incredibly, unreasonably, lost status

by JOHN INGLIS HALL

THE danger which threatened my washerwoman when she cried was dehydration. Dolores Pinda Dacaz was already so small, so dried up with hard work and childbearing; and the slow brown stain of the years had spread over what had once been a skin of golden Spanish velvet. But now she was old, wrinkled, and resigned. It was terrible to be with her when she cried, and she constantly cried, from physical weakness, a sense of guilt and because of the day's misfortunes. In my block of flats in Gibraltar she was known as "*La Viéja Agonía*"—Old Agony.

When she cried, first there would be a distortion of the features of the face, followed by a hoarse, dry sob which hurt the listener. Then, in the corners of her eyes, there would appear two immense, translucent drops, which grew and grew until they became tears as large as any I ever saw. At last the surface tension would give way, gravity would pull and they would run down her dry face and fall with a splash on to the glazed tile floor. Her whole sorrow asserted itself in these two great tears.

I never did anything to make Dolores cry, except to be kind and courteous, to see that she was overfed when she worked for me, and that there was plenty of food left over for her to steal when she went home at night. There would be a bag of rice of which, if she used restraint, she could take a handful or two; a big bag of semolina, of which she could take a quarter; an extra loaf of bread, and a little too much fat. These things and many more, even loving me as she did, she would steal when occasion offered, with a kind of humble embarrassment. We were both downcast and sad over this need of hers to steal food from me—but she had fourteen children over the frontier in Spain, so we could do nothing about it.

Almost since the beginning of my stay in Gibraltar, Dolores had been one of my social problems. She was brought to me by my fat cook, Maria Serafina, who could not have guessed that she had already been the subject of a warning to me. A friend had said, an hour before leaving for England:

"By the way, for a washerwoman, don't have Dolores. I made that mistake. She's the worst washerwoman in the world.

She can't wash. They'll try and foist her on to you. Don't let them."

When at last Maria Serafina came to offer her to me one morning, it was not possible for her to understand fully the joy I felt about my introduction to the abominable Dolores. She could not know that I had placed her on a pinnacle. To be the worst washerwoman in the world is a title to fame, if the accolade has not been lightly accorded. If my friend had not lied and had sound judgment about evil, that day I was to experience a being who housed under her skin a negative talent of a startling order.

Maria Serafina had Dolores concealed behind the outer door of my flat, awaiting a sign to come in. Her entry was affecting. I had expected brash incompetence, bustle and buzz ; somebody who had all the muscular and spiritual talents required of a washerwoman, but which, for crass, cussed human reasons, she set herself against using. I was surprised when a thin, sad, homely woman in black with a black shawl round her head merged diffidently from the darkness of the passage, licking her cracked lips with a dry little tongue, as though her children, long years ago, had sucked all her juices away, leaving her completely dessicated, and labially as uninteresting as a macaw.

She thanked me in a small hoarse voice for employing her. It would cost five shillings a week and the soap. I realized that if she was the worst washerwoman in the world it was because of advancing age, ill-health and the family cares of the miserably poor in South Spain. When she left, I took her to the door, telling her that there would be no washing that week, but all the same I would give her the five shillings, she being now, officially, my washerwoman.

Dolores smiled palely and took the money, but did not manage to thank me directly. Outside the door I heard her whisper to Maria Serafina :

" *Qué simpático, tú señorito !* "

I had scored and was pleased.

Maria Serafina came back into the room a moment later. She looked at me shrewdly.

" Dolores Pinda is a poor woman," she said. " I am sorry for her. So many children and no man."

" But is she a good washerwoman ? " I asked.

Maria Serafina sighed, a tremendous movement of her whole curved surface, raising her shoulders as she breathed the air in, letting them fall as she breathed it out. She shook her head.

" No, señor," she said, " no, she is not."

She paused for a moment, watching for a sign of what I felt. I gave her none.

" Many people who give her work expect her to be perfect : that is not fair. She has not the strength."

I nodded my head. To be perfect is so far beyond everybody's strength.

"So we must work her according to her capacity and help her to do well?" I suggested.

Maria Serafina assented vigorously.

"*Si*, señor, that is the way. You will not be disappointed," she said eagerly.

This may have been Maria Serafina's true belief, but it was she, not I, who worried about the growing devastation in my wardrobe: who believed that she had failed me by advising an appointment which was professionally bad but humanly good: who eventually told me that I was laughed at for my softness with Dolores. All I was conscious of was being laughed with—a very different thing. I was glad, because it was so many years since anyone had enjoyed anything about Dolores that it injected into her life an atmosphere of change, which is holiday.

There are times when people are delivered into the hands of others and they are reborn. For example, one who leads communicates to those under him something of himself and his own spirit, but also, something of themselves. He gives, above all, realization of latent powers. Again, a person can be reborn in the mind of one who performs the act of creation which is his interpretation of their character.

Dolores was delivered to me in her native state, born but unrealized; equipped with poverty, toil, sadness and a sense of the indifference of the world; fourteen children in Spain, a husband who had died like a dog in a ditch, and whose grave she did not know; hunger, exhaustion and the necessity to steal.

On the day she came to my house, I became both her leader and her creator, and this story is an account of my leadership, how I performed my act of creation.

One acts at such times partly by calculation, partly by inward compulsion. My need in the house was for someone to wash my clothes. Maria Serafina's was to keep her place with me and to sustain her reputation as a cook. Dolores' need was simpler: to obtain food for her family.

She had particularly little to offer in exchange. From the end of her first week when she came down wearily and took away my heap of linen, her hopelessness was revealed by every movement she made. Afterwards, whenever she returned my washing, one sock was always missing, one shirt rubbed nearly through on one side, and dirty on the other. Everything was a little late, a trifle browned at the ends. If ever I was angry with her, there would begin that terrible flow of tears.

I realized that it was possible to complain only about the ultimate outrages: when I received an immense khaki shirt, designed for some elephant of a man whom I had never met, instead of one of my own: when there were no handkerchiefs and no sheets in my linen cupboard, and I met Dolores in the street carrying a raffia bag loaded with packages of food, on a day when she should have been washing for me. Then I had to threaten her with everything which Maria Serafina was becoming certain I would never do.

In fact Maria Serafina was the first instrument with which I eased the rebirth of Dolores. Her confidence in my benevolence grew to the point where I knew she must impart it to Dolores, by insisting that the señorito would never, never show her the door, provided that she kept the cupboards reasonably supplied with clean clothes of one kind or another. I also discovered that Maria Serafina washed the cuffs and collars of my shirts herself, before they were handed over to Dolores for the ceremonial beating which they received under the hot sun on the roof of our block of flats.

The household cherished an open secret—the incompetence of Dolores—which, as far as possible, we had evidently decided to keep. The humour of the situation began to permeate our lives. Even on the days when Maria Serafina had to tell me that she needed more housekeeping money than she could possibly have used without the hand of Dolores in every package, we smiled inwardly as we complained to each other of her dishonesty.

Soon we noticed, with an outburst of self-flattery, that Dolores seemed to be growing fatter. Our joint restraint represented, for the first time in her life, a tenuous security, and it was beginning to tell on her physique. When she wept, I sensed that her body could better afford to lose the tears.

Outside, in the big official world, I used my natural garrulousness in the service of Dolores. Had I tried to make her reputation as the perfect servant, to build her up as a mistress of the scrubbing board and iron, delivering, exquisitely starched and with regularity her renewed goods, nobody would have believed me. Instead, I invented her, made of her a character whom I could not do without, a fantastic personality with whose vagaries it was supremely interesting to wrestle. I made them remember, too, at every turn, what they could most easily forget—what life meant for one small human woman with fourteen children to feed and protect, in a stinking back-alley in La Línea de la Concepción.

She became famous, like Lucrezia Borgia, not for her virtues, but for her vices. I billed her wherever I went as the worst washerwoman in the world, and because of it she acquired a certain distinction. Maria Serafina, on account of the difficulty she had in

restraining certain parts of her figure, was already famous. Dolores began to play, as it were, a thin Sancho Panza to her stout Don Quixote.

People got to know her by sight, and she was greeted in the street by distinguished visitors as one of my family. They took, without excessive prompting from me, to sending me their old clothes to give her, for her elder daughters to fashion into suits for the younger members of the family. When I gave them to her, I always mentioned the givers in a hushed voice, promoting those who were in need of it to high rank—generals, admirals, air marshals —or showering them with diplomatic or literary laurels, thickly and impartially.

So much for my own actions. By them I could only fashion Dolores up to a certain point. No matter what I might do, she retained her independence, if not her freedom.

Towards the end of her first month with me, a change came over her. For two days she dragged herself about my flat looking as though she was within hailing distance of the grave—which was of course permanently true—silent and mournful, without the strength, apparently, even to raise her hands to her hair. It was untidy with the almost deliberate disorder of human despair, not accidentally bedraggled, as in the crises of the lower animals. She would not look at me, but the unseen antennæ of my mind, exploring hers as our ways crossed, sensed deadly secrets.

Maria Serafina sought me out at last. She did not come to tell me about Dolores so much as to gossip about something else, with Dolores on her mind. I was eating my lunch. One or two of the heads from a pot of red begonias on my table had fallen and she picked them up one by one with her right hand and transferred them to her left. The air was all Dolores: she was our unborn conversation, not to be denied even when we were silent. For a few minutes we fenced stubbornly without uttering a word, then Maria Serafina sighed and gave way.

"It's Dolores again, señor. She has been naughty. She is a bad girl."

Naughtiness in Dolores covered everything from neglect of her work to petty theft: from overt acts of ignorance and foolishness to the clandestine removal of things which were needed by both our households, but by hers more critically than by mine. In such a war there was only one possible victor, the weaker side. Maria Serafina understood my ability to preserve my own property and defended it with some skill, tempered by our joint pity.

"What is it today?" I asked. "Rice? Or have I no handkerchiefs again?"

She laughed.

"We have no rice as usual, and only one handkerchief, but there are four drying. No. Something more expensive. You know the Policía in Spain? Everybody who works in Gibraltar has to change money there every month at the official rate. Dolores has to change thirty shillings. It is her day already, and she has no money. They have given her until tomorrow to find it, then they will deny her the frontier. If she cannot work here, her children will have no food."

I wondered for an instant whether any of Dolores' other clients would join me in alms, then realized that it was probably only with myself that she was on sufficiently close terms to be able to discuss her deficit. With the others she was the unconsidered pounder of wet garments in fountains and tubs, who, unseen and almost unnoticed, took away dirty clothes and, after a time, returned washed clothes, in exchange for a fee rarely paid to her direct by the employer, from hand to hand. Besides, to get them to join in would mean negotiations, visits, and the day of decision was tomorrow. I sighed.

"So you want me to pay thirty shillings to keep the services of a washerwoman who is an instrument of destruction, like a clothes moth, who steals my food, and, when she cries, breaks my heart?"

Maria Serafina laughed at the thought of Dolores as a clothes moth. Also, she was pleased because she knew instinctively from my reply that I had decided to pay the money.

"We will make her pay it back each month, shilling by shilling," she said decisively.

I shook my head.

"No, we shan't. How shall we manage to give her less than her weekly money when we remember her children, see her face like a cow in pain every day, and realize that it is she who will eat less and less, until the last moment, when her children will have to go hungry?"

There was a short pause, then Maria Serafina shrugged her shoulders and smiled, resigned to our weakness.

"You are right. But I must get Dolores. At least she must be made to understand that you cannot do this every month."

She left the room and a moment later, in the rôle of a somewhat voluptuous and original policewoman, she returned leading the prisoner by the arm. Dolores had been crying, and she shrank from me, as though, contrary to my normal practice, she expected me to do her sudden physical violence. I did not know whether to be kind, sympathetic and affectionate, in which case she might cry herself to death, squeezed to the last drop as though she had

been passed through a mangle, or to be stern, inexorable, severe, and completely out of character. Either way, from now on, Dolores would no longer be afraid of the frontier problem: if I paid up once, she would use my sentimentality as a source of income in the future. I went up to them both and laid a hand on her arm.

"Dolores," I said quietly, "I am extremely angry with you. Never again, you understand, never, must you be so careless as to fall behind with your frontier payments. For this once, I shall give you the money, but I am not rich and cannot do it again."

I spoke kindly, using the simplest words and ideas, so that what I said would be clear to her elementary understanding, but the only thing which meant anything to her was the fact that the money was found. She put back her head and gave a pathetic yelp of relief, then turned her face to Maria's great soft bosom and sobbed. I watched her thin shoulders shake for a minute or so, then noticed that tears were also pouring down Maria Serafina's face and lodging, bright and whole, in Dolores' hair. Suddenly, I wanted to laugh. Maria Serafina sensed it, being herself between tears and laughter, and detached Dolores from her breast, gently as a mother removing the nipple from the mouth of her baby. Dolores caught me unawares by suddenly picking up my hand from my side and kissing it. The touch of her mouth on my skin was like the dry footfall and flutter of a crawling moth.

"I will never do it again, señor, never," she promised brokenly.

A minute later, Maria Serafina and I showed her out of the flat with a great bag of food, part of which she had stolen from me that very morning. My one sensible action that day was to give the thirty shillings to Maria Serafina, so that she could supervise the changing at the frontier.

At the end of each month for the next two months, this scene was repeated with slight variations. In the second month, Dolores' deficit was thirteen shillings: in the third, twenty two. I was no longer prepared to face whatever it might be the next time, and decided to talk it over with Maria Serafina again.

She received me in my kitchen and we sat down together on two wooden chairs to discuss what we could do. It was the season of the white Málaga grapes and as we talked we plucked grapes from a bunch on the table one by one, and considered the weakness of Dolores, and my remedies.

"Do you know, señor, it is a curious thing. We may be angry with Dolores, but since she came to you, her washing is better."

This from Maria Serafina.

"Also, I know she is fatter," she added. "Not much, but still, fatter."

"Because we give her more food and make her eat it here," I replied. "We also provide as much again as she eats for her to take away. This lessens her feeling of guilt at eating when her family does not. The food does her more good as a result. But is her washing really better?"

Maria Serafina went and fetched a pile of new washing.

"*Cláro*, señor, look!"

We turned over the shirts like a pack of frayed cards. There was no doubt about it: her results were less awful than before.

I looked up at Maria Serafina.

"You are right," I said. "I would never have believed it. She is washing better. All we have to do now is to stop the monthly frontier crisis. How can we pay her a little more without making her think she should ask more from other people, and get less work as a consequence?"

Maria Serafina managed to look very wise, but said nothing. I continued.

"My plan is to raise her pay, unofficially, to ten shillings a week. I have also got her a child's money-box. We will tell her that I shall pay her, instead of five shillings a week, six shillings, the level of some of the better washerwomen, and that, because of her troubles at the frontier, every week we shall put two shillings in the box and give her four. In that way we shall collect a reserve towards the money she must change at the end of the month. In fact, as you and I only will know, the sum saved every week will not be two shillings but six shillings, so that at the end of the month there will probably be enough to meet her deficit. We will call the money-box '*la cája del desástre*'—the disaster box."

Maria Serafina laughed aloud.

"'*La cája del desástre!*' *Ai*, señor, what an idea! And Dolores will think it funny too! She will like it!"

"Of course, Dolores must never know that she is getting ten shillings instead of five," I went on. "In fact you will tell her that she must feed her family on the money she earns from other clients. We shall look after her frontier payments, nothing more."

This talk took place only three days after one of Dolores' monthly disasters, and when we called her in to break our news to her, I sensed that she entered the room ready to howl terrifically in face of the last sanction, dismissal. She was bulging with restrained tears. I knew that with good news they would probably leak out anyway, but for the first time since I had known her, I felt sure that her water reserves were sufficient for a cry of the first magnitude.

When I expounded our plan, nothing happened at all! She received it with childish delight, like a game, and when I produced

from my drawer the money-box and inaugurated it solemnly with a two shilling piece, she cackled with laughter like an old hen.

"Thank you, señor, thank you," she said after a moment. "'*La cája del desástre!*' How funny! And what a good idea!"

She left the room with Maria Serafina, all smiles. Within two days there was not a servant or master in my street who did not know everything about our arrangement. Within a week, it had spread throughout the town. Ten days later, at an evening party at Government House, I was told all about Dolores Pinda and her '*cája del desástre*' as a funny story, by a visiting Spaniard.

Dolores, too, was perfectly aware that her real wage from me was now ten shillings a week, but her wage-level with her other clients remained the same as before, reminding her of the reality behind my foolishness.

As the months went by, miracle of miracles, she became, for me and for me only, a better and better washerwoman! Maria Serafina washed my cuffs and collars in advance, as before, but apart from this, Dolores managed to deflect just enough of her small store of energy from the daily struggle for her family's existence to repay a debt of honour to me. It was touching: a rebirth of the flesh and the spirit.

Yet there was one lurking trouble in the whole situation. As I watched the rebirth of Dolores, I began to consider, away in the backyard of my mind, what would happen to her when I left Gibraltar. Nobody would understand her any more. All of what I might be pleased to call my good influence would fall away from her, leaving the old Dolores, the weak, incompetent, light-fingered slattern, in whom nobody took any interest and to whom few were kind. She would become again the worst washerwoman in the world.

It was as I repeated this phrase to myself one day that a sense of guilt overtook me. I realized for the first time what I had done! I had raised Dolores out of the class of the supremely inefficient into the world of the mediocre, whose work nobody would praise and nobody would condemn. It was no longer possible to call her the worst washerwoman in the world. She was not: by a prodigious effort, she had risen to being merely bad. The inconsiderate softness of my heart had deprived her of her one mite of distinction. My whole household, including Dolores, had achieved a measure of that success which so often deprives people of their greatness!

When, six months later, I left Gibraltar for Tangier, taking Maria Serafina with me, I remember how Dolores wept: how, like an animal, she followed me about and cried as I packed, as I ate my last lunch, as I emptied out for the last time the '*cája del*

desástre', and placed the money in her thin brown hand: how the incoming tenant of my flat arrived to take over, a big, sensible, unimaginative Englishman.

"I hear Dolores is the worst washerwoman in the world. Must I take her over? I mean is it true that she is as bad as all that?" he asked.

"Of course not," I replied. "Do you really think I would have kept her if she had been? She does her best. You should take her on. She has a large family to support."

But I knew that I was giving him bad advice, and, sure enough, when I returned to Gibraltar on a short visit some time later, I discovered that Dolores was no longer with him. She had fallen back into the ranks of the almost unemployable, who changed their jobs once a month, due to laziness, weakness of mind or lack of physical strength. It would have been hopeless for me to try again to redeem her, one person against the drag and pull of the whole wicked world. The most I could hope to have left in her mind was the memory of my very real affection.

Yet her time with me did something more, if not to us, to other people. I discovered, for example, that when I left, a man whom I had always looked upon as a rogue and a cynic had taken over, unasked, Dolores' '*cája del desástre*', and operated it for her free of charge. Visiting celebrities still stopped her in Main Street and gave her half-crowns and sent her occasional parcels of old clothes.

Thus the world consoled me: but Dolores? There was no change in her hard life which her emaciated body with its habit of suffering could not absorb. Only I, accidentally her creator, can note privately my belief that in the last analysis, my departure from Gibraltar was of benefit to her. At least it restored her to her place among the gods, to her small fame as the worst washerwoman in the world, which this story celebrates.

* * *

BY DEGREES

If you want to be happy for an hour, get drunk.
If you want to be happy for three days, get married.
If you want to be happy for eight days, kill your pig and eat it.
If you want to be happy for ever, make a garden.

Old Chinese Proverb

★*Last month we left our hero, Horatio Hornblower, a newly fledged Lieutenant, but a prisoner in enemy hands. However the confirmation of his rank gives him the privilege of parole, and a variable fortune once more favours the brave.*

HORNBLOWER, THE DUCHESS AND THE DEVIL

by C. S. FORESTER

PERHAPS, during the long months which followed, it was some mitigation of his unhappiness that for two hours each day his parole gave him freedom; freedom to wander in the streets of the little town, to have a cup of chocolate or a glass of wine—providing he had any money—making polite and laborious conversation with Spanish soldiers or sailors or civilians. But it was better to spend his two hours wandering over the goat paths of the headland in the wind and the sun, in the companionship of the sea, which might alleviate the sick misery of captivity.

There was slightly better food, slightly better quarters. And there was the knowledge that now he was a Lieutenant, and he held the King's commission, that if ever, ever, the war should end and he should be set free he could starve on half pay—for with the end of the war there would be no employment for junior lieutenants. But he had earned his promotion. He had gained the approval of authority, that was something to think about on his solitary walks.

There came a day of south-westerly gales, with the wind shrieking in from across the Atlantic. Across three thousand miles of water it came, building up its strength unimpeded on its way, and heaping up the sea into racing mountain ridges which came crashing in upon the Spanish coast in thunder and spray. Hornblower stood on the headland above Ferrol Harbour, holding his worn greatcoat about him as he leaned forward into the wind to keep his footing. So powerful was the wind that it was difficult to breathe while facing it. If he turned his back he could breathe more easily, but then the wind blew his wild hair forward over his eyes, almost inverted his greatcoat over his head, and furthermore, forced him into little tottering steps down the slope towards Ferrol whither he had no wish to return at present.

For two hours he was alone and free, and those two hours were

precious. He could breathe the Atlantic air, he could walk, he could do as he liked during that time. He could stare out to sea; it was not unusual to catch sight, from the headland, of some British ship of war which might be working slowly along the coast in the hope of snapping up a coasting vessel while keeping a watchful eye upon the Spanish naval activity.

When such a ship went by during Hornblower's two hours of freedom, he would stand and gaze at it, as a man dying of thirst might gaze at a bucket of water held beyond his reach; he would note all the little details, the cut of the topsails and the look of the paint, while misery wrung his bowels. For this was the end of his second year as a prisoner of war. For twenty two months, for twenty two hours every day, he had been under lock and key, herded with five other junior lieutenants in a single room in the fortress of Ferrol. And today the wind roared by him, shouting in its outrageous freedom. He was facing into the wind; before him lay Corunna, its white houses resembling pieces of sugar scattered over the slopes.

Between him and Corunna was all the open space of Corunna Bay, flogged white by the wind, and on his left hand was the narrow entrance to Ferrol Bay. On his right was the open Atlantic; from the foot of the low cliffs there the long wicked reef of the Dientes del Diablo—the Devil's Teeth—ran out to the northward, square across the path of the racing rollers driven by the wind. At half minute intervals the rollers would crash against the reef with an impact that shook even the solid headland on which Hornblower stood, and each roller dissolved into spray which was instantly whirled away by the wind to reveal again the long black tusks of the rocks.

Hornblower was not alone on the headland; a few yards away from him a Spanish militia artilleryman on lookout duty gazed with watery eyes through a telescope with which he continually swept the seaward horizon. When at war with Britain it was necessary to be vigilant; a fleet might suddenly appear over the horizon, to land a little army to capture Ferrol, and burn the dockyard installations and the ships. No hope of that today, thought Hornblower—there could be no landing of troops on that raging lee shore.

But all the same the sentry was undoubtedly staring very fixedly through his telescope right to windward; then he wiped his streaming eyes with his coat sleeve and stared again. Hornblower peered in the same direction, unable to see what it was that had attracted the sentry's attention. The sentry muttered something to himself, and then turned and ran clumsily down to

the little stone guardhouse which sheltered the rest of the militia detachment stationed there to man the guns of the battery on the headland. He returned with the sergeant of the guard, who took the telescope and peered out to windward in the direction pointed out by the sentry.

The two of them jabbered in their barbarous Gallego dialect; in two years of steady application Hornblower had mastered Galician as well as Castilian, but in that howling gale he could not intercept a word. Then finally, just as the sergeant nodded his agreement, Hornblower saw with his naked eyes what they were discussing. A pale grey square on the horizon above the grey sea—a ship's topsail. She must be running before the gale making for the shelter of Corunna or Ferrol.

It was a rash thing for a ship to do, because it would be no easy matter for her to round-to into Corunna Bay and anchor, and it would be even harder for her to hit off the narrow entrance to the Ferrol inlet. A cautious captain would claw out to sea and heave-to with a generous amount of sea room until the wind moderated. These Spanish captains, said Hornblower to himself, with a shrug of his shoulders; but naturally they would always wish to make harbour as quickly as possible when the Royal Navy was sweeping the seas.

But the sergeant and the sentry were more excited than the appearance of a single ship would seem to justify. Hornblower could contain himself no longer, and edged up to the chattering pair, mentally framing his sentences in the unfamiliar tongue.

"Please, gentlemen," he said, and then started again, shouting against the wind. "Please, gentlemen, what is it that you see?"

The sergeant gave him a glance, and then, reaching some undiscoverable decision, handed over the telescope—Hornblower could hardly restrain himself from snatching it from his hands. With the telescope to his eye he could see far better; he could see a ship-rigged vessel, under close-reefed topsails (and that was much more sail than it was wise to carry) hurtling wildly towards them. And then a moment later he saw the other square of grey. Another topsail. Another ship.

The fore-topmast was noticeably shorter than the main-topmast, and not only that, but the whole effect was familiar—she was a British ship of war, a British frigate, plunging along in hot pursuit of the other, which seemed most likely to be a Spanish privateer. It was a close chase; it would be a very near thing, whether the Spaniard would reach the protection of the shore batteries before the frigate overhauled her.

Hornblower lowered the telescope to rest his eye, and instantly the sergeant snatched it from him. He had been watching the

Englishman's face, and Hornblower's expression had told him what he wanted to know. Those two ships out there were behaving in such a way as to justify his rousing his officer and giving the alarm.

Sergeant and sentry went running back to the guardhouse, and in a few moments the artillerymen were pouring out to man the batteries on the verge of the cliff. Soon enough came a mounted officer urging his horse up the path; a single glance through the telescope sufficed for him. He went clattering down to the battery and the next moment the boom of a gun from there alerted the rest of the defences. The flag of Spain rose up the flagstaff beside the battery, and Hornblower saw an answering flag rise up the flagstaff on San Anton, where another battery guarded Corunna Bay. All the guns of the harbour defences were now manned, and there would be no mercy shown to any British ship that came in range.

Pursuer and pursued had covered quite half the distance already towards Corunna. They were hull-up over the horizon now to Hornblower on the headland, who could see them plunging madly over the grey sea—Hornblower momentarily expected to see them carry away their topmasts or their sails blow from the bolt-ropes. The frigate was half a mile astern still, and she would have to be much closer than that to have any hope of hitting with her guns in that sea.

Here came the Commandant and his staff, clattering on horseback up the path to see the climax of the drama; the Commandant caught sight of Hornblower, and doffed his hat with Spanish courtesy, while Hornblower, hatless, tried to bow with equal courtesy. Hornblower walked over to him with an urgent request—he had to lay his hand on the Spaniard's saddlebow and shout up into his face to be understood.

"My parole expires in ten minutes, sir," he yelled, "May I please extend it? May I please stay?"

"Yes, stay, señor," said the Commandant, generously.

Hornblower watched the chase, and at the same time observed closely the preparations for defence. He had given his parole, but no part of the gentlemanly code prevented him from taking note of all he could see. One day he might be free, and one day it might be useful to know all about the defences of Ferrol. Everyone else of the large group on the headland was watching the chase, and excitement rose higher as the ships came racing nearer.

The British captain was keeping a hundred yards or more to seaward of the Spaniard, but he was quite unable to overhaul her—in fact it seemed to Hornblower as if the Spaniard was actually increasing his lead. But the British frigate being to seaward meant that escape in that direction was cut off. Any turn away from the

land would reduce the Spaniard's lead to a negligible distance. If he did not get into Corunna Bay or Ferrol Inlet he was doomed.

Now he was level with the Corunna headland, and it was time to put his helm hard over and turn into the Bay and hope that his anchors would hold in the lee of the headland. But with a wind of that violence hurtling against cliffs and headlands strange things can happen. A flaw of wind coming out of the Bay must have caught her aback as she tried to round-to. Hornblower saw her stagger, saw her heel as the back-lash died away and the gale caught her again.

She was laid over almost on her beam-ends and as she righted herself Hornblower saw a momentary gap open up in her main-topsail. It was momentary because from the time the gap appeared the life of the topsail was momentary; the gap appeared and at once the sail vanished, blown into ribbons as soon as its continuity was impaired. With the loss of its balancing pressure the ship became unmanageable; the gale pressing against the fore-topsail swung her round again before the wind like a weather-vane. If there had been time to spare to set a fragment of sail farther aft she would have been saved, but in those enclosed waters there was no time to spare. At one moment she was about to round the Corunna headland; at the next she had lost the opportunity forever.

There was still the chance that she might fetch the opening to the Ferrol Inlet; the wind was nearly fair for her to do that—nearly. Hornblower on the Ferrol headland was thinking along with the Spanish captain down there on the heaving deck. He saw him try to steady the ship so as to head for the narrow entrance, notorious among seamen for its difficulty.

He saw him get her on her course, and for a few seconds as she flew across the mouth of the bay it seemed as if the Spaniard would succeed, against all probability, in exactly hitting off the entrance to the inlet.

Then the backwash hit her again. Had she been quick on the helm she might still have been safe, but with her sail pressure so outbalanced she was bound to be slow in her response to her rudder. The shrieking wind blew her bows round, and it was instantly obvious, too, that she was doomed, but the Spanish captain played the game out to the last. He would not pile his ship up against the foot of the low cliffs. He put his helm hard over; with the aid of the wind rebounding from the cliffs he made a gallant attempt to clear the Ferrol headland altogether and give himself a chance to claw out to sea.

A gallant attempt, but doomed to failure as soon as begun; he actually cleared the headland, but the wind blew his bows round again, and, bows first, the ship plunged right at the long jagged line

of the Devil's Teeth. Hornblower, the Commandant, and everyone hurried across the headland to look down at the final act of the tragedy. With tremendous speed, driving straight before the wind, she raced at the reef. A roller picked her up as she neared it and seemed to increase her speed. Then she struck, and vanished from sight for a second as the roller burst into spray all about her. When the spray cleared she lay there transformed. Her three masts had all gone with the shock, and it was only a black hulk which emerged from the white foam. Her speed and the roller behind her had carried her almost over the reef—doubtless tearing her bottom out—and she hung by her stern, which stood out clear of the water, while her bows were just submerged in the comparatively still water in the lee of the reef.

There were men still alive on her. Hornblower could see them crouching for shelter under the break of her poop. Another Atlantic roller came surging up, and exploded on the Devil's Teeth, wrapping the wreck round with spray. But yet she emerged again, black against the creaming foam. She had cleared the reef sufficiently far to find shelter for most of her length in the lee of the thing that had destroyed her. Hornblower could see those living creatures crouching on her deck. They had a little longer to live—they might live five minutes, perhaps, if they were lucky. Five hours if they were not.

All round him the Spaniards were shouting maledictions. Women were weeping; some of the men were shaking their fists with rage at the British frigate, which, well satisfied with the destruction of her victim, had rounded-to in time and was now clawing out to sea again under storm canvas. It was horrible to see those poor devils down there die. If some larger wave than usual, bursting on the reef, did not lift the stern of the wreck clear so that she sank, she would still break up for the survivors to be whirled away with the fragments. And, if it took a long time for her to break up, the wretched men sheltering there would not be able to endure the constant beating of the cold spray upon them.

Something should be done to save them, but no boat could round the headland and weather the Devil's Teeth to reach the wreck. That was so obvious as not to call for a second thought. But— Hornblower's thoughts began to race as he started to work on the alternatives.

The Commandant on his horse was speaking vehemently to a Spanish naval officer, clearly on the same subject, and the naval officer was spreading his hands and saying that any attempt would be hopeless. And yet— For two years Hornblower had been a prisoner; all his pent-up restlessness was seeking an outlet, and after two years of the misery of confinement he did not care whether

he lived or died. He went up to the Commandant and broke into the argument.

"Sir," he said, "let me try to save them. Perhaps from the little bay there— Perhaps some of the fishermen would come with me."

The Commandant looked at the officer and the officer shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you suggest, sir?" asked the Commandant of Hornblower.

"We might carry a boat across the headland from the dockyard," said Hornblower, struggling to word his ideas in Spanish, "but we must be quick—quick!"

He pointed to the wreck, and force was added to his words by the sight of a roller bursting over the Devil's Teeth.

"How would you carry a boat?" asked the Commandant.

To shout his plan in English against that wind would have been a strain; to do so in Spanish was beyond him.

"I can show you at the dockyard, sir," he yelled. "I cannot explain. But we must hurry!"

"You want to go to the dockyard, then?"

"Yes—oh yes."

"Mount behind me, sir," said the Commandant.

Awkwardly Hornblower scrambled up to a seat astride the horse's haunches and clutched at the Commandant's belt. He bumped frightfully as the animal wheeled round and trotted down the slope. All the idlers of the town and garrison ran beside them.

The dockyard at Ferrol was almost a phantom organization, withered away like a tree deprived of its roots, thanks to the British blockade. Situated as it was at the most distant corner of Spain, connected with the interior by only the roughest of roads, it relied on receiving its supplies by sea, and any such reliance was likely, with British cruisers off the coast, to be disappointed. The last visit of Spanish ships of war had stripped the place of almost all its stores, and many of the dockyard hands had been pressed as seamen at the same time. But all that Hornblower needed was there, as he knew, thanks to his careful observation.

He slid off the horse's hind quarters—miraculously avoiding an instinctive kick from the irritated animal—and collected his thoughts. He pointed to a low dray—a mere platform on wheels—which was used for carrying beef barrels and brandy kegs to the pier.

"Horses," he said, and a dozen willing hands set to work harnessing a team.

Beside the jetty floated half a dozen boats. There was tackle

and shears, all the apparatus necessary for swinging heavy weights about. To put slings under a boat and swing her up was the work of only a minute or two. These Spaniards might be dilatory and lazy as a rule, but inspire them with the need for instant action, catch their enthusiasm, present them with a novel plan, and they would work like madmen—and some of them were skilled workmen, too.

Oars, mast and sail, not that they would need the sail, rudder, tiller, and balers were all present. A group came running from a store shed with chocks for the boat, and the moment these were set up on the dray, the dray was backed under the tackle and the boat lowered on to them.

"Empty barrels," said Hornblower. "Little ones—so."

A swarthy Galician fisherman grasped his intention at once, and amplified Hornblower's halting sentences with voluble explanation. A dozen empty water breakers, with their bungs driven well home, were brought, and the swarthy fisherman climbed on the dray and began to lash them under the thwarts. Properly secured, they would keep the boat afloat even were she filled to the gunwale with water.

"I want six men," shouted Hornblower, standing on the dray and looking round at the crowd. "Six fishermen who know little boats."

The swarthy fisherman lashing the breakers in the boat looked up from his task. "I know whom we need, sir," he said.

He shouted a string of names, and half a dozen men came forward; burly, weatherbeaten fellows, with the self reliant look on their faces of men used to meeting difficulties. It was apparent that the swarthy Galician was their captain.

"Let us go, then," said Hornblower. but the Galician checked him.

Hornblower did not hear what he said, but some of the crowd nodded, turned away, and came hastening back staggering under a breaker of fresh water and a box that must contain biscuit. Hornblower was cross with himself for forgetting the possibility of their being blown out to sea. And the Commandant, still sitting on his horse and watching these preparations with a keen eye, took note of these stores too.

"Remember, sir, that I have your parole," he said.

"You have my parole, sir," said Hornblower—for a few blessed moments he had actually forgotten that he was a prisoner.

The stores were safely put away into the sternsheets and the fishing boat captain caught Hornblower's eye and got a nod from him.

"Let us go," he roared to the crowd.

The iron-shod hoofs clashed on the cobbles and the dray lurched forward, with men leading the horses, men swarming alongside, and Hornblower and the captain riding on the dray like triumphing generals in a procession. They went through the dockyard gate, along the level main street of the little town, and turned up a steep lane which climbed the ridge constituting the backbone of the headland. The enthusiasm of the crowd was still lively; when the horses slowed as they breasted the slope a hundred men pushed at the back, strained at the sides, tugged at the traces to push the dray up the hillside.

At the crest the lane became a track, but the dray still lurched and rumbled along. From the track diverged an even worse path, winding its way sideways down the slope through arbutus and myrtle towards the sandy cove which Hornblower had first had in mind—on fine days he had seen fishermen working a seine net on that beach, and he himself had taken note of it as a suitable place for a landing party should the Royal Navy ever plan a descent against Ferrol.

The wind was blowing as wildly as ever; it shrieked round Hornblower's ears. The sea as it came in view was chaotic with wave-crests, and then as they turned a shoulder of the slope they could see the line of the Devil's Teeth running out from the shore up there to windward, and still hanging precariously from their jagged fangs was the wreck, black against the seething foam. Somebody raised a shout at the sight, everybody heaved at the dray, so that the horses actually broke into a trot and the dray leaped and bounced over the obstructions in its way.

"Slowly," roared Hornblower. "Slowly!"

If they were to break an axle or smash a wheel at this moment the attempt would end in ludicrous failure. The Commandant on his horse enforced Hornblower's cries with loud orders of his own, and restrained the reckless enthusiasm of his people. More sedately the dray went on down the trail to the edge of the sandy beach. The wind picked up even the damp sand and flung it stinging into their faces, but only small waves broke here, for the beach was in a recess in the shoreline, the southwesterly wind was blowing a trifle off shore here, and up to windward the Devil's Teeth broke the force of the rollers as they raced along in a direction nearly parallel with the shoreline. The wheels plunged into the sand and the horses stopped at the water's edge.

A score of willing hands unharnessed the horses and a hundred willing arms thrust the dray out into the water—all these things were easy with such vast manpower available. As the first wave broke over the floor of the dray the crew scrambled up and stood ready.

There were rocks here, but mighty heaves by the militiamen and the dockyard workers waist-deep in water forced the dray over them. The boat almost floated off its chocks, and the crew forced it clear and scrambled aboard, the wind beginning to swing her immediately. They grabbed for their oars and put their backs into half a dozen fierce strokes which brought her under command; the Galician captain had already laid a steering oar in the notch in the stern, with no attempt at shipping rudder and tiller. As he braced himself to steer he glanced at Hornblower, who tacitly left the job to him.

Hornblower, bent against the wind, was standing in the stern sheets planning a route through the rocks which would lead them to the wreck. The shore and the friendly beach were gone now, incredibly far away, and the boat was struggling out through a welter of water with the wind howling round her.

In those jumbled waves her motion was senseless and she lurched in every direction successively. It was well that the boatmen were used to rowing in broken water so that their oars kept the boat under way, giving the captain the means by which, tugging fiercely at the steering oar, he could guide her through that maniacal confusion. Hornblower, planning his course, was able to guide the captain by his gestures, so that the captain could devote all the necessary attention to keeping the boat from being suddenly capsized by an unexpected wave.

The wind howled, and the boat heaved and pitched as she met each lumpy wave, but yard by yard they were struggling up to the wreck. If there was any order in the waves at all, they were swinging round the outer end of the Devil's Teeth, so that the boat had to be carefully steered, turning to meet the waves with her bows and then turning back to gain precarious yards against the wind. Hornblower spared a glance for the men at the oars; at every second they were exerting their utmost strength. There could never be a moment's respite—tug-and-strain, tug-and-strain, until Hornblower wondered how human hearts and sinews could endure it.

But they were edging up towards the wreck. Hornblower, when the wind and spray allowed, could see the whole extent of her canted deck now. He could see human figures cowering under the break of the poop. He saw somebody there wave an arm to him. Next moment his attention was called away when a jagged monster suddenly leaped out of the sea twenty yards ahead. For a second he could not imagine what it was, and then it leaped clear again and he recognized it—the butt end of a broken mast. The mast was still anchored to the ship by a single surviving shroud attached to the upper end of the mast and to the ship, and the mast drifting down to leeward, was jerking and leaping on the waves as though

some sea god below the surface was threatening them with his wrath. Hornblower called the steersman's attention to the menace and received a nod in return; the steersman's shouted "*Nómbre de Diós*" was whirled away in the wind.

They kept clear of the mast, and as they pulled up along it Hornblower could form a clearer notion of the speed of their progress now that he had a stationary object to help his judgment. He could see the painful inches gained at each frantic tug on the oars, and could see how the boat stopped dead or even went astern when the wilder gusts hit her, the oar blades pulling ineffectively through the water. Every inch of gain was only won at the cost of an infinity of labour.

Now they were beyond the mast, close to the submerged bows of the ship, and close enough to the Devil's Teeth to be deluged with spray as each wave burst on the farther side of the reef. There were inches of water washing back and forth in the bottom of the boat, but there was neither time nor opportunity to bale it out. This was the trickiest part of the whole effort, to get close enough alongside the wreck to be able to take off the survivors without stoving in the boat. There were wicked fangs of rock all about the after end of the wreck, while forward, although the forecastle was above the surface at times the forward part of the waist was submerged. But the ship was canted a little over to port, towards them, which made the approach easier.

When the water was at its lowest level, immediately before the next roller broke on the reef, Hornblower, standing up and craning his neck, could see no rocks beside the wreck in the middle part of the waist where the deck came down to water level. It was easy to direct the steersman towards that particular point, and then, as the boat moved in, to wave his arms and demand the attention of the little group under the break of the poop, and to point to the spot to which they were approaching. A wave burst upon the reef, broke over the stern of the wreck, and filled the boat almost full. She swung back and forth in the eddies, but the kegs kept her afloat and quick handling of the steering oar and lusty rowing kept her from being dashed against either the wreck or the rocks.

"Now!" shouted Hornblower—it did not matter that he spoke English at this decisive moment. The boat surged forwards, while the survivors, releasing themselves from the lashings which had held them in their shelter, came slithering down the deck towards them. It was a little of a shock to see there were but four of them—twenty or thirty men must have been swept overboard when the ship hit the reef. The bows of the boat moved towards the wreck.

At a shouted order from the steersman the oars fell still. One survivor braced himself and flung himself into the bows. A stroke

of the oars, a tug at the steering oar, and the boat nosed forward again, and another survivor plunged into the boat.

Then Hornblower, who had been watching the sea, saw the next breaker rear up over the reef. At his warning shout the boat backed away to safety—comparative safety—while the remaining survivors went scrambling back up the deck to the shelter of the poop. The wave burst and roared, the foam hissed and the spray rattled, and then they crept up to the wreck again.

The third survivor poised himself for his leap, mistimed it, and fell into the sea, and no one ever saw him again. He was gone, sunk like a stone, crippled as he was with cold and exhaustion, but there was no time to spare for lamentation. The fourth survivor was waiting his chance and jumped at once, landing safely in the bows.

"Any more?" shouted Hornblower, and received a shake of the head in reply; they had saved three lives at the risk of eight.

"Let us go," said Hornblower, but the steersman needed no telling.

Already he had allowed the wind to drift the boat away from the wreck, away from the rocks—away from the shore. An occasional strong pull at the oars sufficed to keep her bows to wind and wave. Hornblower looked down at the fainting survivors lying in the bottom of the boat with the water washing over them. He bent down and shook them into consciousness; he picked up the balers and forced them into their numb hands. They must keep active or die.

It was astonishing to find darkness closing about them, and it was urgent that they should decide on their next move immediately. The men at the oars were in no shape for any prolonged further rowing; if they tried to return to the sandy cove whence they had started they might be overtaken both by night and by exhaustion while still among the treacherous rocks off the shore there. Hornblower sat down beside the Galician captain, who laconically gave his views while vigilantly observing the waves racing down upon them.

"It is growing dark," said the captain, glancing round the sky. "Rocks. The men are tired."

"We had better not go back," said Hornblower.

"No."

"Then we must get out to sea."

Years of duty on blockade, of beating about off a lee-shore, had ingrained into Hornblower the necessity for seeking sea room.

"Yes," said the captain, and he added something which Hornblower, thanks to the wind and his unfamiliarity with the language,

was unable to catch. The captain roared the expression again, and accompanied his words with a vivid bit of pantomime with the one hand he could spare from the steering oar.

"A sea anchor," decided Hornblower to himself. "Quite right."

He looked back at the vanishing shore, and gauged the direction of the wind. It seemed to be backing a little southerly; the coast here trended away from them. They could ride to a sea anchor through the hours of darkness and run no risk of being cast ashore as long as these conditions persisted.

"Good," said Hornblower aloud.

He imitated the other's bit of pantomime and the captain gave him a glance of approval. At a bellow from him the two men forward took in their oars and set to work at constructing a sea anchor—merely a pair of oars attached to a long painter paid out over the bows. With this gale blowing the pressure of the wind on the boat set up enough drag on the float to keep their bows to the sea. Hornblower watched as the sea anchor began to take hold of the water.

"Good," he said again.

"Good," said the captain, taking in his steering oar.

Hornblower realized only now that he had been long exposed to a winter gale while wet to the skin. He was numb with cold, and he was shivering uncontrollably. At his feet one of the three survivors of the wreck was lying helpless; the other two had succeeded in baling out most of the water and as a result of their exertions were conscious and alert. The men who had been rowing sat drooping with weariness on their thwarts. The Galician captain was already down in the bottom of the boat lifting the helpless man in his arms. It was a common impulse of them all to huddle down into the bottom of the boat, beneath the thwarts, away from that shrieking wind.

So the night came down on them. Hornblower found himself welcoming the contact of other human bodies; he felt an arm round him and he put his arm round someone else. Around them a little water still surged about on the floorboards; above them the wind still shrieked and howled.

The boat stood first on her head and then on her tail as the waves passed under them, and at the moment of climbing each crest she gave a shuddering jerk as she snubbed herself to the sea anchor. Every few seconds a new spate of spray whirled into the boat upon their shrinking bodies; it did not seem long before the accumulation of spray in the bottom of the boat made it necessary for them to disentangle themselves, and set about, groping in the darkness, the task of baling the water out again. Then they could huddle down

again under the thwarts.

It was when they pulled themselves together for the third baling that in the middle of his nightmare of cold and exhaustion Hornblower was conscious that the body across which his arm lay was unnaturally stiff; the man the captain had been trying to revive had died as he lay there between the captain and Hornblower. The captain dragged the body away into the stern sheets in the darkness, and the night went on, cold wind, and cold spray, jerk, pitch, and roll, sit up and bale and cower down and shudder.

It was hideous torment; Hornblower could not trust himself to believe his eyes when he saw the first signs that the darkness was lessening. And then the grey dawn came gradually over the grey sea, and they were free to wonder what to do next. But as the light increased the problem was solved for them, for one of the fishermen, raising himself up in the boat, gave a hoarse cry, and pointed to the northern horizon, and there, almost hull-up, was a ship, hove-to under storm canvas. The captain took one glance at her—his eyesight must have been marvellous—and identified her.

"The British frigate," he said.

She must have made nearly the same amount of leeway hove-to as the boat did riding to her sea anchor.

"Signal to her," said Hornblower, and no one raised any objections.

The only white object available was Hornblower's shirt, and he took it off, shuddering in the cold, and they tied it to an oar and raised the oar in the mast-step. The captain saw Hornblower putting on his dripping coat over his bare ribs and in a single movement peeled off his thick blue jersey and offered it to him.

"Thank you, no," protested Hornblower, but the captain insisted; with a wide grin he pointed to the stiffened corpse lying in the stern sheets and announced he would replace the jersey with the dead man's clothing.

The argument was interrupted by a further cry from one of the fishermen. The frigate was coming to the wind; with treble-reefed fore and main-topsails she was heading for them under the impulse of the lessening gale. Hornblower saw her running down on them; a glance in the other direction showed him the Galician mountains, faint on the southern horizon—warmth, freedom and friendship on the one hand; solitude and captivity on the other.

Under the lee of the frigate the boat bobbed and heaved fantastically; many inquisitive faces looked down on them. They were cold and cramped; the frigate dropped a boat and a couple of nimble seamen scrambled on board. A line was flung from the frigate, a whip lowered a breeches ring into the boat, and the British seamen helped the Spaniards one by one into the breeches and held

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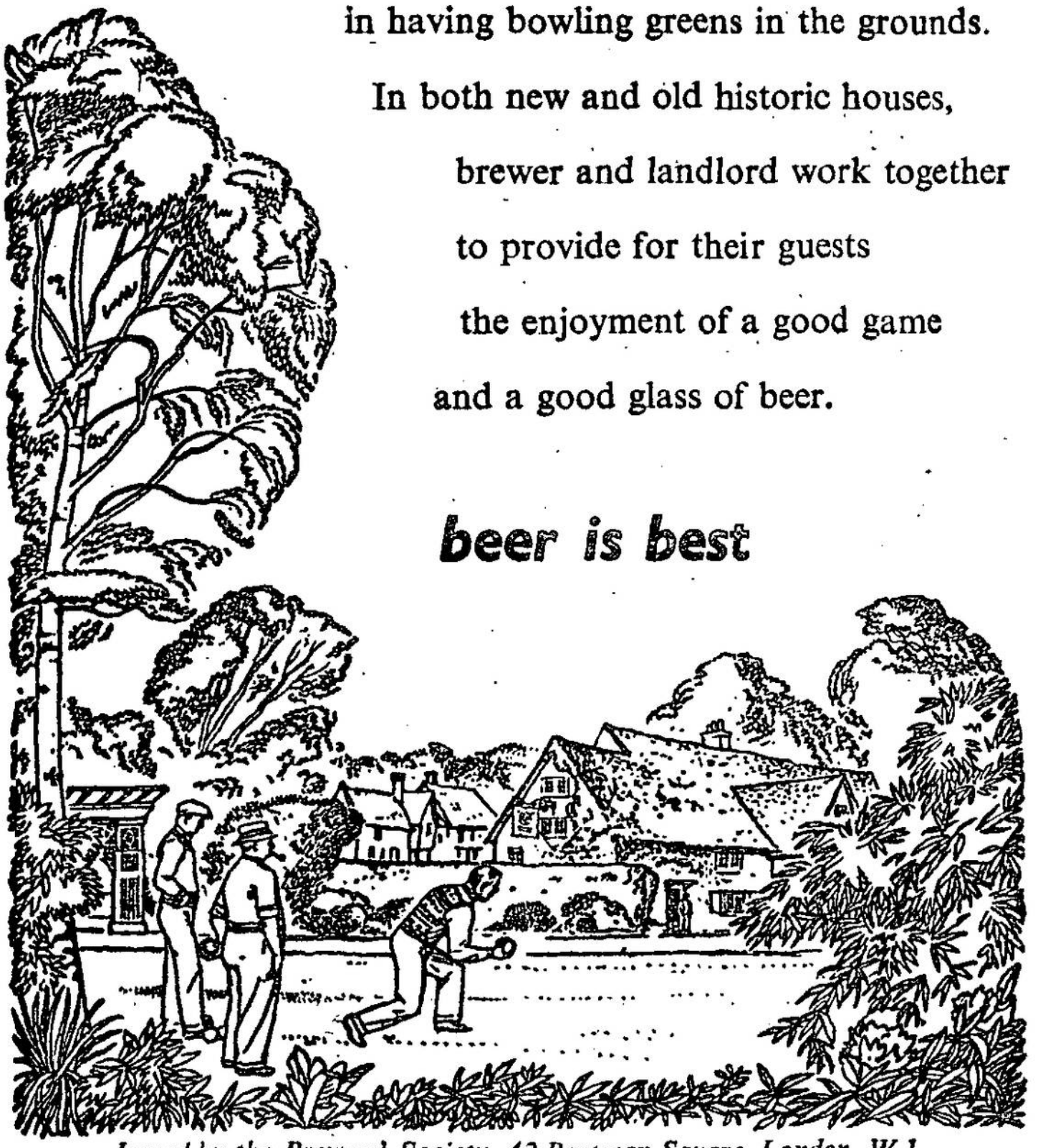

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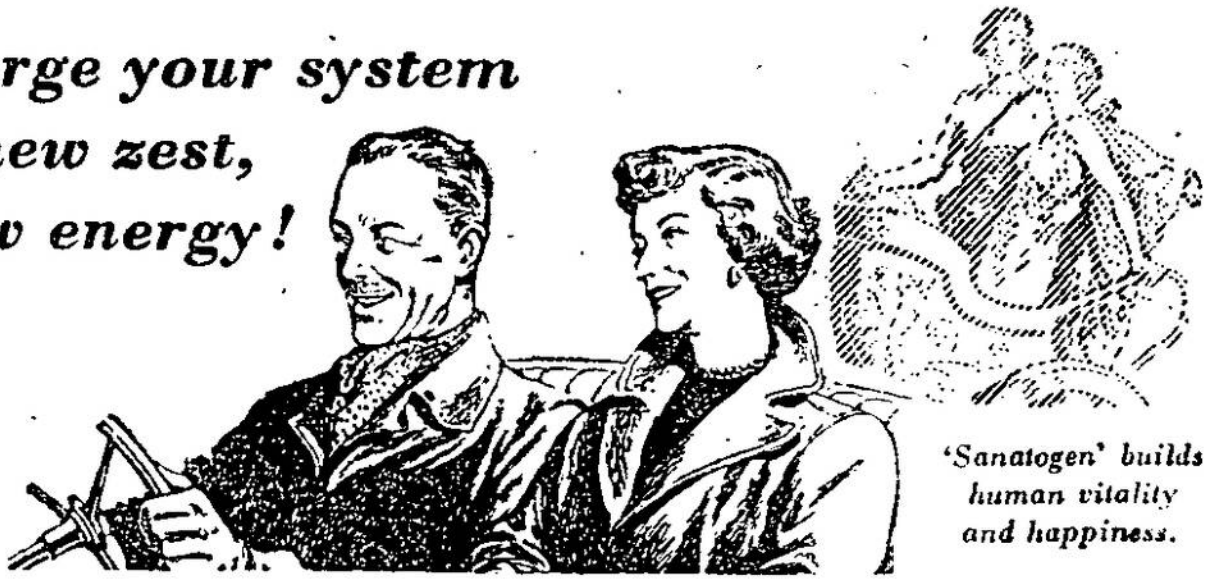

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them steady as they were swung up to the frigate's deck.

"I go last," said Hornblower when they turned to him. "I am a King's Officer."

"Lor' lumme," said the seamen.

"Send the body up, too," said Hornblower. "It can be given decent burial."

The stiff corpse was grotesque as it swayed through the air. The Galician captain tried to dispute with Hornblower the honour of going last, but Hornblower would not be argued with. Then finally the seamen helped him put his legs into the breeches, and secured him with a line round his waist. Up he soared, swaying dizzily with the roll of the ship; then they drew him in to the deck, lowering and shortening, until half a dozen strong arms took his weight and laid him gently on the deck.

"There you are, my hearty, safe and sound," said a bearded seaman.

"I am one of the King's Officers," said Hornblower. "Where's the officer of the watch?"

Wearing marvellous dry clothing, Hornblower found himself soon drinking hot rum-and-water in the cabin of Captain George Crome, of His Majesty's frigate *Syrtis*. Crome was a thin, pale man with a depressed expression, but Hornblower knew of him as a first rate officer.

"These Galicians make good seamen," said Crome. "I can't press them. But perhaps a few will volunteer sooner than go to a prison hulk."

"Sir," said Hornblower, and hesitated. It is ill for a junior lieutenant to argue with a post captain.

"Well?"

"Those men came to sea to save life. They are not liable to capture."

Crome's cold grey eyes became actively frosty—Hornblower was right about it being ill for a junior lieutenant to argue with a post captain.

"Are you telling me my duty, sir?" he asked.

"Good heavens no, sir," said Hornblower hastily. "It's a long time since I read the Admiralty Instructions and I expect my memory's at fault."

"Admiralty Instructions, eh?" said Crome, in a slightly different tone of voice.

"I expect I'm wrong, sir," said Hornblower, "but I seem to remember the same instruction applied to the other two—the survivors."

Even a post captain could only contravene Admiralty Instructions

at his peril.

"I'll consider it," said Crome.

"I had the dead man sent on board, sir," went on Hornblower, "in the hope that perhaps you might give him proper burial. Those Galicians risked their lives to save him, sir, and I expect they'd be gratified."

"A Popish burial? I'll give orders to give 'em a free hand."

"Thank you, sir," said Hornblower.

"And now as regards yourself. You say you hold a commission as lieutenant. You can do duty in this ship until we meet the Admiral again. Then he can decide. I haven't heard of the *Indefatigable* paying off, and legally you may still be borne on her books."

And that was when the devil came to tempt Hornblower, as he took another sip of hot rum-and-water. The joy of being in a King's ship again was so keen as to be almost painful. To taste salt beef and biscuit again, and never again to taste beans and garbanzos. To have a ship's deck under his feet, to talk English. To be free—to be free! There was precious little chance of ever falling again into Spanish hands. Hornblower remembered with agonizing clarity the flat depression of captivity. All he had to do was not to say a word. He had only to keep silence for a day or two. But the devil did not tempt him long, only until he had taken his next sip of rum-and-water. Then he thrust the devil behind him and met Crome's eyes again.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said.

"What for?"

"I am here on parole. I gave my word before I left the beach."

"You did? That alters the case. You were within your rights, of course."

The giving of parole by captive British officers was so usual as to excite no comment.

"It was in the usual form, I suppose?" went on Crome. "That you would make no attempt to escape?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then what do you decide as a result?"

Of course Crome could not attempt to influence a gentleman's decision on a matter as personal as a parole.

"I must go back, sir," said Hornblower, "at the first opportunity."

He felt the sway of the ship, he looked round the homely cabin, and his heart was breaking.

"You can at least dine and sleep on board tonight," said Crome. "I'll not venture inshore again until the wind moderates. I'll

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She hove-to within musket shot, and it was a mild surprise to the sentry when in reply to the officer's hail someone rose up in the boat and replied in unmistakable Gallego dialect. Summoned alongside the landing slip, the cutter put ashore ten men and then headed out again to the frigate.

Nine men were laughing and shouting; the tenth, the youngest, walked with a fixed expression on his face with never a sign of emotion—his expression did not change even when the others, with obvious affection, put their arms round his shoulders. No one ever troubled to explain to the sentry who the imperturbable young man was, and he was not very interested. After he had seen the group shipped off across Corunna Bay towards Ferrol he quite forgot the incident.

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It was almost Spring when a Spanish militia officer came into the barracks which served as a prison for officers in Ferrol.

"Señor Hornblower?" he asked—at least Hornblower, in the corner, knew that was what he was trying to say. He was used to the way Spaniards mutilated his name.

"Yes?" he said, rising.

"Would you please come with me? The Commandant has sent me for you, sir."

The Commandant was all smiles. He held a despatch in his hands.

"This, sir," he said, waving it at Hornblower, "is a personal order. It is countersigned by the Duke of Fuentesauco, Minister of Marine, but it is signed by the First Minister, Prince of the Peace and Duke of Alcudia."

"Yes, sir," said Hornblower.

He should have begun to hope at that moment, but there comes a time in a prisoner's life when he ceases to hope. He was more interested, even, in that strange title of Prince of the Peace which was now beginning to be heard in Spain.

"It says—'*We, Carlos Leonardo Luis Manuel de Godoy y Boegas, First Minister of His Most Catholic Majesty, Prince of the Peace, Duke of Alcudia and Grandee of the First Class, Count of Alcudia, Knight of the Most Sacred Order of the Golden Fleece, Knight of the Holy Order of Santiago, Knight of the Most Distinguished Order of Calatrava, Captain General of His Most Catholic Majesty's forces by Land and Sea, Colonel General of the Guardia de Corps, Admiral of the Two Oceans, General of the cavalry, of the infantry, and of the artillery*'—in any event, sir, it is an order to me to take immediate steps to set you at liberty. I am to restore you under flag of truce to your fellow countrymen, in recognition of—'*your courage and self-sacrifice in saving life at the peril of your own.*'"

"Thank you, sir," said Hornblower.

* * *

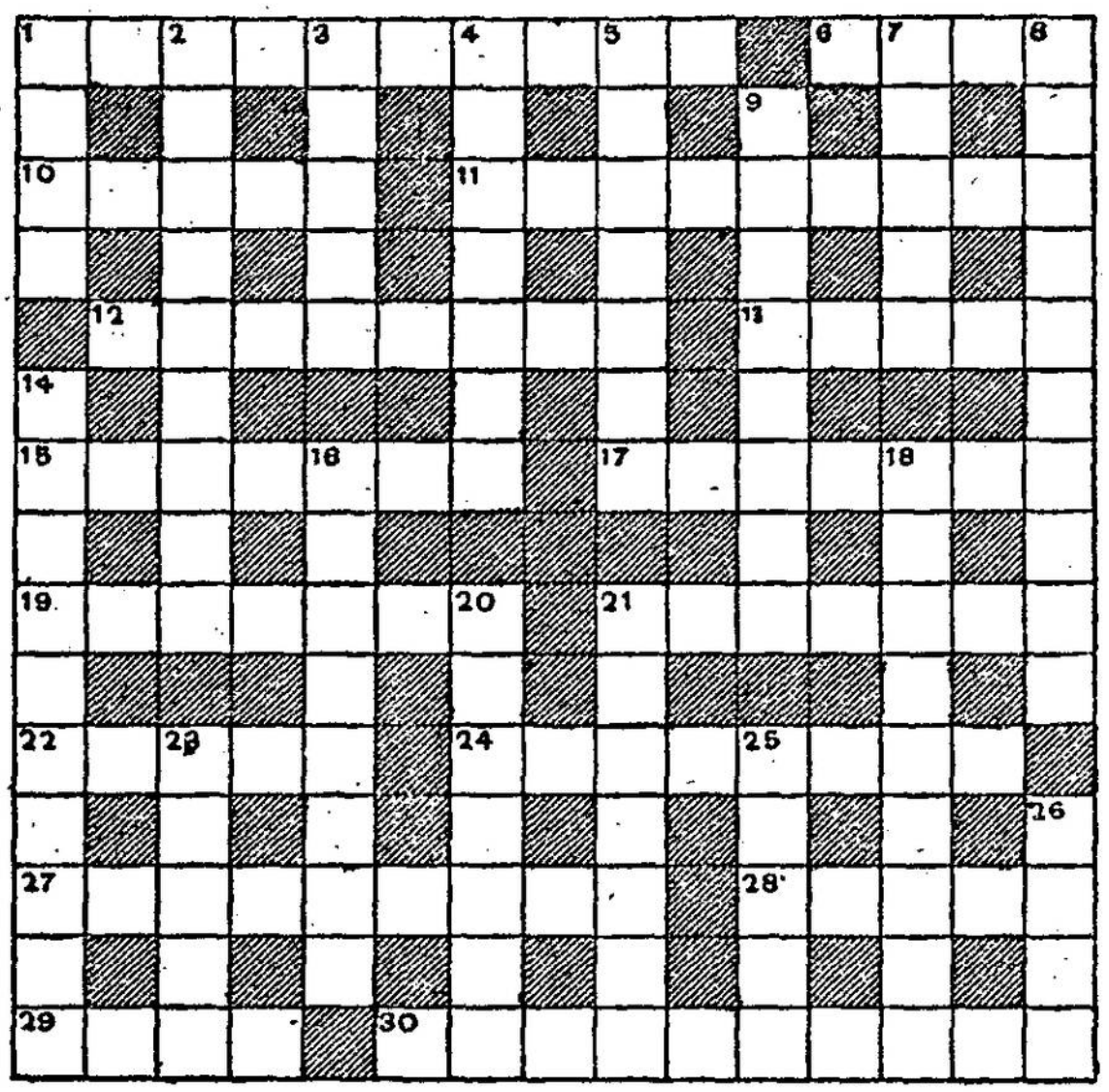
SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 160

Across : 1, Round robin. 6, Calf. 10, Debit. 11, Customary. 12, Inchcape. 13, Titan. 15, Painted. 17, The Turf. 19, Laggard. 21, Redness. 22, Shark. 24, Germanic. 27, Undoubted. 28, Reich. 29, Easy. 30, Grass widow.

Down : 1, Ride. 2, Unbinding. 3, Dutch. 4, Orchard. 5, Inspect. 7, Abaft. 8, Flying Fish. 9, Southend. 14, Apple Sauce. 16, Thankful. 18, Unedified. 20, Dog star. 21, Reredos. 23, Andes. 25, Arrow. 26, Show.

ARGOSY CROSS WORD

Solution on page 159



CLUES

Across

1 Too many crumbs may explain this serious list (5, 5).
6 Young animal always with one (4).
10 This side of the books keeps the money-lender in business (5).
11 Is it usual to take us to my car? (9).
12 Just a dwarf's cloak, it seems (8).
13 Beyond others in all things (5).
15 "She — her face, and tired her head and looked out at a window." (Second Book of Kings) (7).
17 If you don't lose your shirt at the laundry, you may do so here (3, 4).
19 Lazy glad rag (7).
21 Russian cape?—blushingly connected with part of 1 across perhaps (7).
22 Hush! Noah's residence looks fishy! (5).
24 Cain germ (anag.) (8).
27 Little Edward ends up quite certain (9).
28 24 across parliament (5).
29 This money does not last (4).
30 Should her mourning outfit be in lawn? (5, 5).

Down

1 One of Cowper's heroes had an exciting one on his twentieth wedding anniversary (4)
2 What a book is doing when it falls to pieces? (9).
3 Double this and you'll talk nonsense (5).
4 "'Tis given out that, sleeping in my — A serpent stung me." (Hamlet) (7).
5 If heartless it might bite, so have a good look (7).
7 "Not to the fore, Captain!" (5).
8 Sounds like an airy vertebrate that has lost its feathers (6, 4).
9 Remove an article from this resort to get a noise (8).
14 Newton's fruity impudence! (5, 5).
16 Halt funk and be grateful! (8).
18 Still in the dark (9).
20 One of the bright spots on a dark night in winter (3, 4).
21 This comes between the altar and the rising sun (7).
23 The dollar range? (5).
25 A silent flier with a noisy end (5).
26 Demonstrative entertainment? (4).

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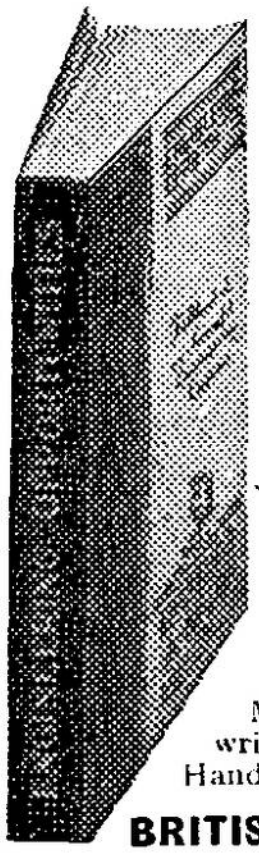

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